



THE INDEPENDENT

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SPECIAL

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facing a
year of
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Our beef is banned, our meat trade faces ruin, but new figures beg the question:

Where is the CJD epidemic?

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

Official figures reveal that the number of possible cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in Britain this year do not justify the worldwide panic over beef. The new evidence emerged as British meat traders warned that their businesses were days away from collapse, and European vets refused to lift their ban.

The latest figures, obtained exclusively by the *Independent*, show that since the start of the year, 26 suspected cases of CJD have been referred to the Na-

tional CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh, which checks any possible case of the disease nationwide. In the past five years, only half the cases referred to the unit have been confirmed as CJD – implying that this year's total will be about 50 cases. That is in line with 1994, the highest total on record, when 52 people died of CJD, and well before the latest panic, said Dr Rob Will, the unit's head, yesterday. Forty-four people died in 1995.

The new evidence should counter fears about a possible link between eating BSE-infected meat and developing

CJD. Panic was first triggered last month when the Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, announced in the Commons that the Surveillance Unit was studying 10 cases in the past two years, of a new strain of the disease among young adults. Dr Will said yesterday that the evidence so far did not support suggestions of an epidemic.

But the news may come too late to meat traders, who yesterday wrote to the Prime Minister, protesting that many of them faced imminent liquidation, and that "unless immediate action is taken, the [British] industry as a whole will plumb

met into irreversible decline". Thousands of jobs were at risk, they warned.

The International Meat Trade Association (IMTA) also accused the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) of seeming "not to understand, or not to care".

There was more bad news from Europe yesterday, as a meeting of senior European veterinary officers decided to retain the world export ban imposed last month on British beef products – even for products such as gelatine and tallow, used in sweets, pills and candles. Scientists last week confirmed

that these posed no risk to humans.

EU officials said it was clear that there was still a political need to maintain the ban, whatever the scientific reality.

"There was a quite strong body of opinion that it is still too early to support making any changes to the ban," said a British Government spokesman. "It is still felt that the ban has not been in force long enough to reassure consumers."

MAFF called the decision "bitingly disappointing" and vowed to continue fighting it.

Meanwhile, the European Commission is awaiting de-

tailed plans from the Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, for a programme of selective slaughter of animals and herds which may have come in contact with BSE.

Mr Hogg has until the end of the month to produce his proposals – the earliest date for consideration of removing the beef ban entirely. Last night, government officials accepted with reluctance that a swift end to the ban was politically impossible.

However, the IMTA insisted that swift action was necessary to protect livelihoods and businesses. Its members have £35m

worth of stock which has been rendered unsaleable by the EU's ban, yet which is nevertheless fit for human consumption under British guidelines.

Sheila Gore, an independent statistical researcher for the Medical Research Council, said that the key to the CJD Unit's data would be what happened over the next 12 months. "Typically, if you are looking for an epidemic, you look to see how long it takes the number of cases to double." However, the low incidence of CJD – normally one per million each year – means that as few as four cases of the new strain this year could indicate statistically that there was an epidemic of CJD under way.

Dr Will said, "Until two or three weeks ago we had only had 14 referrals of suspected cases, which is what we would expect. Since the public, there have been another 12 referrals, but it's easy to overinterpret that. In between, I had written to every neurologist in the country asking them to tell us about anything that looked like CJD. This can't be interpreted as suggesting an increase in the absolute numbers of people with CJD."

Labour to exploit rail chief's exit

PETER RODGERS
and COLIN BROWN

Labour yesterday seized on a decision by Roger Salmon, the official in charge of the sale of Britain's train services, to step down early as evidence of mounting disarray in the rail privatisation programme.

Mr Salmon's announcement that he is to leave in October without another job in sight, 13 months before his contract expires, came days ahead of the publication next Monday of the prospectus for the £1.8bn flotation of Railtrack.

His resignation was hailed by Labour as evidence that the Government's privatisation plans were "falling apart". Clare Short, Labour's transport spokeswoman, said: "The rats are leaving the sinking ship. I am not surprised. I am even pleased. It is another symptom that the process of privatisation is falling apart."

Labour is threatening to defeat the Government next Wednesday by forcing a vote in the Commons over the privatisation of British Rail.

There were suggestions in the City that Mr Salmon had not found it easy to deal with frictions with a succession of secretaries of state on the mechanics and timetable of the privatisation. One source said that while there had been no outright rows he might have stayed on longer if relations with the Government had been better.

Labour also believes that Mr Salmon was disheartened by the unpopularity of the job, and Ms Short claimed he was leaving before a Labour government implements its plans to abolish the franchise director's job. That threat will make it hard to recruit a senior successor.

Mr Salmon rejected suggestions of difficulties with the current Secretary of State for Transport and said "I get on extremely well with Sir George".

[Young] ... I cannot remember a single hard word between us in the nine months since he was appointed."

He said the targets he had set himself had been achieved and "the ship is sailing very well, and very fast". By the autumn, preparations for completion of the sales would be at an advanced stage. It was appropriate for the long-term health of the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising to hand over to someone else, he added.

Mr Salmon, 50, confirmed that he had not found a new job and said he planned to take a holiday before deciding what to do.

The announcement of his early departure, less than four years into his five-year term of office as director of passenger franchising, was forced on the Government because under the rules for share sales it will have to be disclosed in the prospectus.

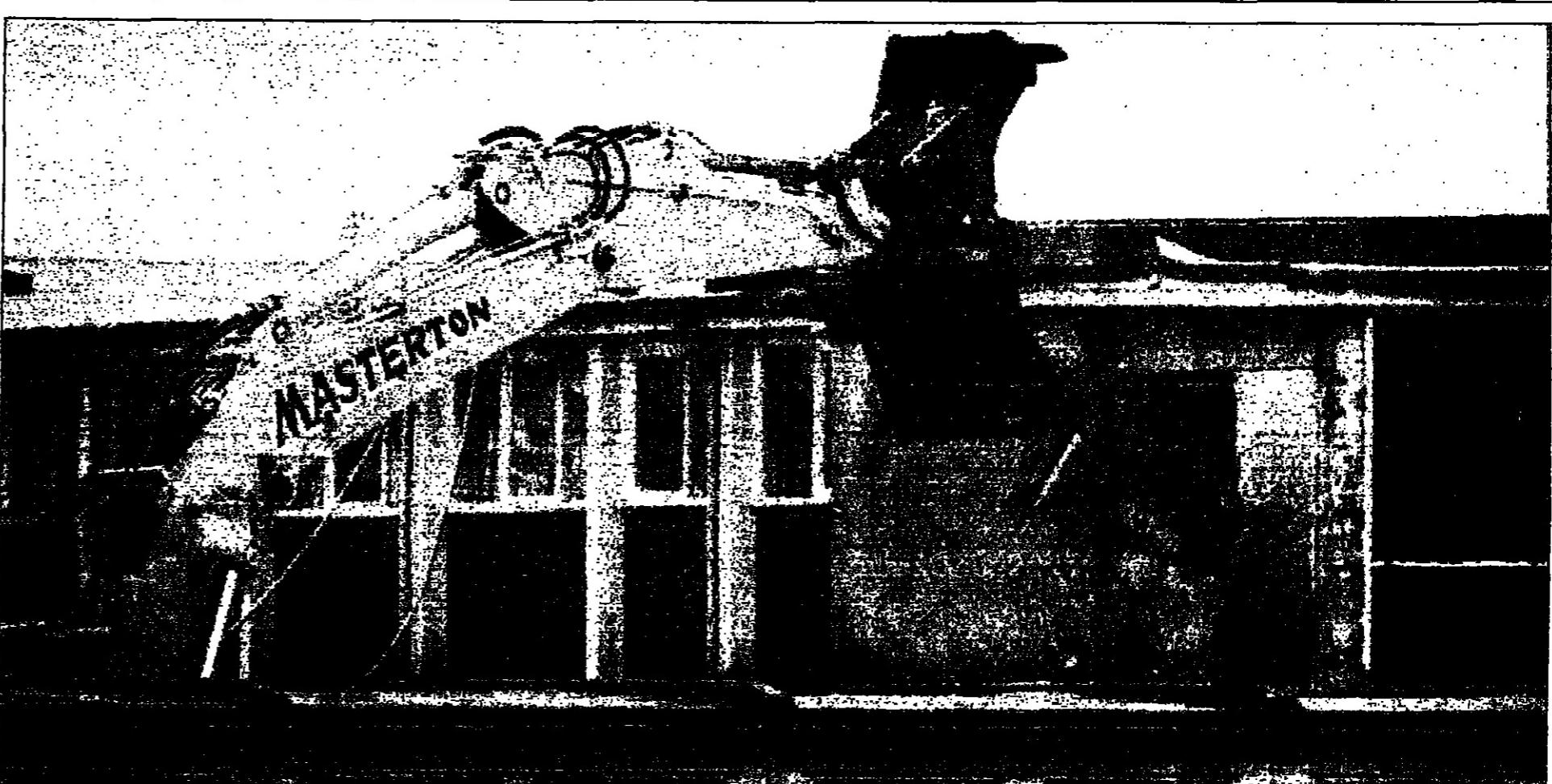
Mr Salmon first told Sir George of his intention to leave last December. No successor has been found and the Government is to advertise the post and appoint headhunters to seek a replacement.

The public acknowledgement that he is leaving before the sales are complete could hardly have come at a worse time for the privatisation programme, because only two of the 25 train-operating franchises have so far been let and another two awarded subject to contract.

By the time Mr Salmon leaves nearly half the franchises are still likely to be awaiting buyers.

A former merchant banker at NM Rothschild, Mr Salmon is thought to have private means which give him the income to take a career break without having a job to go to.

He said he would be willing to wait longer than October to ensure a smooth handover if the appointment of a successor could not be made in time. His replacement would have to be able to "stand up to the secretary of state as well as work with him".



Final act: An earthmover begins demolishing the gym at Dunblane Primary School where 16 children and their teacher were shot dead by Thomas Hamilton, who went on to take his own life, last month. Before demolition work began yesterday some of the bereaved parents were allowed their request to visit the gym one last time. Photograph: Ian Waldie/Reuters

Tory favour for Murdoch followed Heseltine lunch

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

The Government introduced a

controversial amendment to the Broadcasting Bill lifting restrictions on Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, within two weeks of a lunch meeting between Mr Murdoch and Michael Heseltine.

A spokesman for the Deputy Prime Minister confirmed yesterday that Mr Heseltine had lunch with Mr Murdoch six weeks ago. It is believed they discussed an offer from Mr Murdoch to provide satellite dishes for every school in Britain, in return for government support over Mr Mur-

doch's plans to introduce digital satellite services in the UK. That would involve the launch of a new digital satellite, capable of providing a full range of televised programming.

The sale of a backroom deal has angered Labour MPs and could spark renewed debate over the Government's new Bill, emerged last night.

Last month, soon after the lunch, the Government introduced an amendment to the Bill that would remove restrictions on Mr Murdoch's BSkyB that prohibit it from owning more than 20 per cent of a domestic satellite service.

Lord Donoughue, the Labour peer who led the Opposi-

tion in the Lords' debate on the Bill, said last night: "I saw at the time that this [amendment] was a major concession to Sky, although I didn't know what was behind it. Now we apparently have the answer."

The Government said the amendment was technical. A spokesman for the heritage department, which is sponsoring the Bill, said: "There is no direct connection [between the amendment and any deal between Mr Murdoch and Mr Heseltine]. We are not aware of any lobbying on this issue."

A spokeswoman for News International, Mr Murdoch's newspaper company, said: "We are pleased that the Govern-

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Tyson on ropes after new sex attack claim

JOHN CARLIN
Washington

Mike Tyson, unchastened by three years in jail for rape and unredeemed by his conversion to Islam, remains unable to control the demons within. So says a woman who claims that the World Boxing Council heavyweight champion sexually assaulted her in a Chicago nightclub on Sunday.

Police say they are investigating a complaint of criminal sexual assault against Tyson, who legitimately flattened British champion Frank Bruno in Las Vegas last month.

Tyson, who has made no

comment about the allegation, has not been charged. A Chicago television station described the woman as a 25-year-old beautician from Indiana who, according to her lawyer, is frightened and wishes to keep her identity a secret.

The lawyer, Jerry Lee Petet, did not provide details of the alleged assault but said his client called the police after her release from a Chicago hospital on Monday morning. "We're going to pursue the criminal avenue and also a civil case," Mr Petet said. "She's scared, upset, angry, hurt." The manager of The Clique nightclub, Tyson's spiritual adviser, came up with

what might prove to be a more convincing defence.

"I know one thing," said Mr Siddeeq, who attended a Muslim prayer service with Tyson on Sunday morning. "Every time Mike runs, or moves, there's people out there who want to do their thing. I give no credence to this report."

Tyson was convicted in 1992 of raping Desiree Washington, a college student and Miss Black America contestant. He never repented, nor did he ever admit his guilt, but he was released on parole 12 months ago after serving three years of a 10-year sentence. He is on probation until 1999.

IN BRIEF

Churchill row

MP Winston Churchill may finance his divorce with \$4.5m of the lottery money paid for his grandfather's papers. Page 3

Sun 'slowing down'

The sun's core may be rotating more slowly than it did a decade ago. Page 9

Today's weather

Some sunny spells after a misty start. Section two, page 29



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news

Untapped potential of liquid assets

NICOLE VEASH

Inland waterways, part of our 19th-century heritage, need more care, attention – and investment – according to a report published yesterday.

The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) says the use and conservation of over 5,000 miles of waterways should be higher up the political agenda.

Waterways have "untapped economic and social potential" and the Government should investigate why, despite incentives, there was little evidence of the transfer of freight haulage from roads to waterways.

Among the 31 recommendations, IWAAC suggests anglers should pay towards maintaining the rivers they use.

And it also proposes measures to encourage tourism, leisure and sport.

Audrey Lee, chairman of IWAAC, said: "Waterways are not like stately homes which you just look at. We must make better use of them."



Still waters: Holidaymakers aboard narrow boats on the Grand Union Canal at Buckby Lock, near Daventry, Northamptonshire

Photograph: Brian Harris

Teachers plan action against bullying heads

FRAN ABRAMS

Bullying headteachers who make their staff ill by shouting at them in front of pupils, damaging their property and even hitting them, could face action, a teachers' union conference will be told today.

A growing number of teachers are becoming sick with worry because of pressures brought to bear as a result of increased competition, inspections and league tables, the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers warn.

A report published at the union's annual meeting in Glasgow presents a catalogue of abuses to which members have been subjected.

One head scrawled the words "dead, dead" on a teacher's desk in red chalk and hit another member of staff, the report says.

A teacher took her sick child into school wrapped in a blanket because she was so afraid to take time off, and another left after being bullied by a governor, who was also the parish priest.

In another case, an independent schoolteacher who refused the sexual advances of the head was so stressed by the incidents that she was off sick for a year before taking early retirement. Others claimed to have suffered nightmares for months after leaving their jobs and developed illnesses such as

shingles and eczema through stress.

A survey of 3,500 teachers carried out by the union found that seven out of 10 had either been subjected to serious bullying or had witnessed the bullying of others.

The most common forms consisted of innuendo, sarcasm and being shouted at in front of colleagues or children. But two per cent of those who responded had suffered physical violence and damage to their property.

One male teacher in a specialist school said he felt powerless to deal with his head's increasingly violent and bizarre behaviour. "She physically hit one member of staff. She wrote 'dead, dead' on my desk in red chalk. The woman was deranged, but no one wanted to deal with it. I consider myself tough, but she almost broke me," he wrote.

Another commented: "I can only describe the ethos of my school as like working for Idi Amin – I never know if I'm going to be smitten upon or be verbally 'clubbed to death'."

A motion to be debated today will call for support for members who take concerted action against bullying. Such practices contravene health and safety laws and should not be tolerated, it says.

Jim Hughes, deputy head of Thamesmead Community College in Bedeley, Greater London, blamed increased competition

Owners expect house price rise

HEATHER MILLS

Home Affairs Correspondent

Home owners are confident the housing market will pick up, with a rise in prices and quicker house sales, according to a report released yesterday.

Two-thirds of 20,000 householders questioned expected house prices to rise in the next year. Around 6 per cent thought they would fall. Although 55 per cent interviewed thought they would have some difficulty selling their houses if put on the market, this was down from 74 per cent in 1992.

The findings come from the latest report from the Survey of English Housing, a continuous survey on the state of housing in England begun in April 1993 and published by the Office for National Statistics.

The average mortgage-holder is spending £57 a week on their mortgage, while private tenants are paying £70 a week, housing association tenants £46 and council tenants £37.

The number of owner-occupiers remains at 13.4 million (68 per cent of householders).

Another survey published yesterday has found the rise in the annual cost of living has slowed, helped by stagnating house and fuel costs. Food prices and the cost of rented housing were still forging ahead, according to the Cost of Living Survey by Reward Group for firms relocating their employees.

The survey looks at wages and costs, such as housing, food and tax. It said the cost of living rose 2.1 per cent in the last 12 months. The average family of four living in a three-bedroom house with a car and telephone had a gross income of £19,238 compared with £19,039 last year.

Louise JURY

The House of Hemp was not entirely sure who alerted them, but it was just hours before its official opening that the inspector and chief inspector from Bethnal Green police station chose to call.

The house is to be home to the Cannabis Hemp Information Club (CHIC) whose members are all keen advocates of the lesser-known qualities of

Attack on experts' 'ecstasy safe' claim

Leading drug experts yesterday backed a social services director who provoked a storm of protest after claiming the dance drug ecstasy is "relatively safe".

Paul Bettis, father of Leah, the Essex teenager who died last year after taking a tablet on her 18th birthday, immediately denounced the claim by Mary Hartnoll, Glasgow's director, as "totally irresponsible".

Nigel Evans, the Conservative MP and anti-ecstasy campaigner, said she was ignoring the "appalling" side-effects, including heart and kidney failure and long term depression.

However, some psychiatrists and drug experts said that, taken in context, her views were "spot on" and "helpful" to the debate on the drug problem.

Mrs Hartnoll's comments came in a written response to the city's licensing board, which has launched a hard-line anti-drugs drive. It is shunning the introduction of harm reduction measures - like advice and

chill-out areas in clubs - being promoted by those working in the field of drugs use and abuse.

She argued the "far" message was not getting through to young people because it did not accord with their own drug-using experience and behaviour.

The irony is that ecstasy, for example, is a relatively safe drug - risk of death has been calculated as one in 6.8 million - (the risk of dying from an ordinary dose of aspirin is very much greater) and young people tend to know this," she wrote.

"For every highly-publicised death, those who use regularly balance their experience of their own, and friends' experience of frequent, safe and enjoyable usage".

She was not available for comment yesterday, but Mr Bettis said of her views: "To come from such a prominent person, it's absolutely stupid."

He told the BBC: "She should look at her facts and get her facts right before she makes such a sweeping statement."

American research had found ecstasy caused permanent

and irreversible brain damage, he said, referring to a two year study carried out by Dr Charles Grob for the US Food and Drug Administration in California.

However, UK drug experts said they wanted to see the research published and tested before commenting on it - and stressed the damage caused by prolonged use of alcohol and smoking.

Now big business in the UK - with estimated sales of 100 million tablets a year - ecstasy or "E" was patented in Germany 80 years ago as a treatment for obesity. It triggers chemical changes in the brain, giving a boost of energy and a feeling of well-being.

John Davies, professor of psychology at Strathclyde University, said: "Even using the most alarming estimates, ecstasy is not a major cause of death among young people."

He suggested that Mrs Hartnoll's views were shared by most working in the field of drug use and abuse, who wanted to see harm reduction - rather than failed attempts at eradication.

Cannabis centre opens

Cannabis sativa. Its opening had obviously prompted alarm at the local station

Those behind the centre say that while innocent hemp - grown in Britain under licence and used for paper-making and textiles - was the same plant as illegal cannabis, the typical hemp seed possessed only a fraction of THC, the "active ingredient" which produces the "high" prohibited by law.

The officers were clearly

aware of the difference. Spotting nothing resembling an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act they departed, leaving untouched the chocolate-flavoured with the nutty taste of hemp seed and other hemp-enhanced goodies.

Thus the formal opening of the information centre and museum in Shoreditch, dedicated to public education, was able to go ahead. The Home Secretary may be invited.

Lots of memories

A fan of *The Archers* spent £50 on memorabilia from the early days of the radio soap. Scripts, fan mail and photographs were put on sale by actress Joy Davies, who played Helen Fairbrother in the 1950s. Jan Stretch, 45, from Worcester, bought all three lots after beating off bids from a former producer of the BBC Radio 4 programme.

Dead baby appeal

Police appealed for the mother of a new-born baby found dead in undergrowth to come forward after a post-mortem revealed the boy was stillborn.

Four boys playing near a pool on wasteland behind a leisure centre in Dudley, West Midlands, found the body on Tuesday.

It is believed to have been in the undergrowth for at least 24 hours.

Lloyd's of London

We have been asked to correct a report in last Friday's *Independent* (5 April) of a racial discrimination action in which two Asian risk assessors were awarded £30,000. Both men were employed by Lloyd's Register of Shipping, and not, as stated, by the Lloyd's of London insurance market.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

Austria	... Sch 10	Namibia	... TELCO
Belgium	... BFB	Ivory	... TELCO
Cameroun	... Pk 300	Madagascar	... Eas 250
Cyprus	... C1120	Malta	... 120 pages
Denmark	... Dk 15	Norway	... Norsk
Irish Rep.	... Pk	Portugal	... Eas 250
France	... F14	Spain	... Pk 200
Greece	... D4450	Switzerland	... Eas 250
Luxembourg	... LFB	USA	... Eas 250

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BACK ISSUES

Back copies of the *Independent* are available from: Home Newspapers, telephone 0998 402455.

Ruddles County Riddles.

No. 4. Pointless Road Sign.

Last summer, Stephen and Joanne Pecker, were on their way to meet some very old friends, the Bells. They had arranged to meet over a refreshing pint of that king of ales, Ruddles County at the Singing Lark Pub, deep in the countryside.

After passing through Little Norton, they reached a crossroads. Their friends' instructions said "Follow signs to Chipping Sherbourne".

But the signpost had been knocked over and they were unable to tell which direction to take.

Not having a map, they set in their car trying to decide which of three possible roads they should take. After 20 minutes Ted Burns, delivery driver for Ruddles Brewery, came across them, and was able to guide them to the pub.

They spent the rest of the afternoon catching up with their old friends over a flavoursome pint of County.

The Bells told them how they could have discovered the right way to go without Ted's help.

Could you have pointed them in the right direction?

Subscribers: These serial issues posted free. Single back issues can now be ordered direct from the publisher. The right to change the address of a subscription is reserved.

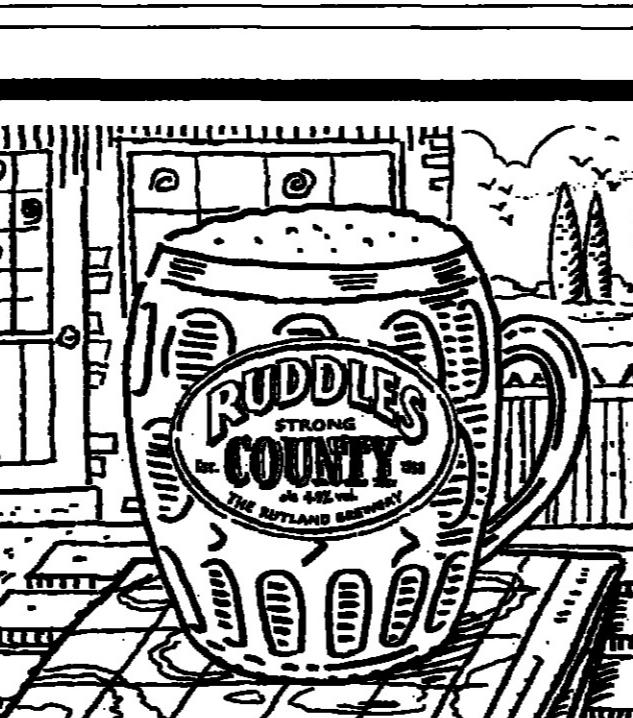


Illustration: Alan Hargreaves

Murdoch and a favour for Sky

FROM PAGE 1

not say what Mr Heseltine and Mr Murdoch discussed.

The Government has been looking at ways of expanding the advantages of the information highway to more people. Its efforts were redoubled following the controversial deal between BT and the Labour Party last autumn under which BT would connect schools, hospitals and public institutions in return for the freedom to offer broadcast services over its telephone lines under a Labour Government.

Lewis Moonie, the Labour MP who will jointly handle the Opposition's role in the Commons debate on the Bill, starting next week, said: "I can't read Murdoch's mind but I certainly know about Heseltine, and he is desperate to be seen to be doing something about education and computers."

As reported in the *Independent* last month, the controversial amendment was aimed at removing domestic satellite from the list of services which large newspaper groups are barred from controlling. Other items on the list include ITV licences and national radio.

Only publishers controlling more than 20 per cent of the

UK national press had been caught by the original clause.

This takes in Mr Murdoch's News International – owner of the *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, and the *Mirror* Group, which publishes the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Record*, *the People* and *the Sunday People*.

Both are owned by Lloyd's Register of Shipping, and were, as stated, by the Lloyd's of London insurance market.

BSkyB is currently a non-domestic broadcaster, because it uses the Astra satellite, based in Luxembourg. By launching its own UK-based service, it could provide up to 200 channels directly to UK homes, freeing up space on Astra to use for its continental pay-TV operations, in league with Bertelsmann and Canal Plus, with which it has formed a strategic alliance.

Analysts say BSkyB could

therefore extend its current dominant position into the digital age.

The amendment also allows

the Mirror Group to launch a domestic satellite service. But David Montgomery, chief executive of MGN, said last night: "There is only one company that could afford to launch such a service, and that is Sky. It smacks of political impropriety."

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JULY 10 1996

IN BRIEF
Green light for
photo licences

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Churchill may use lottery cash to pay ex-wife

REBECCA FOWLER



The trust which received £12.5m of lottery money for the sale of the Churchill archive, amid national fury, said it would consider allowing Winston Churchill, the MP and grandson of the former prime minister, to take out £4.5m for part of his divorce settlement.

Peregrine Churchill, the 82-year-old nephew of Sir Winston and one of three trustees, said they had not been approached yet, but they would consider an application from Mr Churchill, 55, who was seen as the driving force behind the sale of his grandfather's papers last year.

As part of his divorce settlement from Minnie, his wife of 32 years, Mr Churchill is allegedly offering to set up a new trust with money from the sale. Their children, John, 20, Jennie, 28, Marina, 27, and Randolph, 30, would benefit from the fund, while Mrs Churchill would live off the proceeds from any investments.

Peregrine Churchill said he and the other two trustees, Ian Montrose, the family solicitor, and Lord Digby, would consider any requests for money once all the lottery grant had been paid by the Treasury.

He said: "He hasn't asked us yet, and if he did the trustees

would have to consider it on its merits. They have the power to do anything because the trust allows for the fact that conditions change, but we would not just give money away because we like someone."

The Churchill papers were the only valuable asset left to the family when Sir Winston died in 1965. According to his family, he was anxious his offspring should not suffer poverty as he did in his youth, and he drew up the trust after the Second World War, which specified the beneficiaries would be his direct descendants in the male line for four generations.

The collection, known as the Chartwell Papers, contains almost everything Sir Winston

wrote before 1945, including letters home from prep school, notes on the abdication, and drafts of wartime speeches, including "We shall fight them on the beaches".

One of the most outspoken critics of the sale was stoical about the reported intention of Mr Churchill to create a new trust. Dr John Charmley, the historian and Churchill biographer, said he still considered that the nation had in effect bought something it already owned a large proportion of.

But he said: "You can't deny Minnie the fact she deserves a substantial sum, but quite whether the British public should be involved in funding it is a different matter."

Mr Churchill, MP for Delyn in Manchester who lists his hobbies as "country pursuits" in Who's Who, is reportedly anxious to marry Luce Danielson, 53, a Belgian jeweller designer. He previously had a five-year affair with Soraia Khashoggi, former wife of the arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi. He was also linked to Jan Cushing, an American heiress, who said of his wife: "If she has a good lawyer, she'll demand half his money, and she deserves it. She's given him her life." Mr Churchill was unavailable for comment.

Police offer chance to join the crimebusters

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

The public will be given the chance to take part in a helicopter rescue and solve a tricky murder before finishing the day by quelling a riot, under proposals for Britain's first national police museum.

The police "visitors centre" is expected to cost about £20m and hopes to attract 600,000 people a year, with an extra 600,000 at touring exhibitions.

Chief constables, who gave their backing to the plans at a meeting yesterday, hope to cash in on the public's fascination with crime, criminals and cops and provide an education, with a cross between the Science Museum and Alton Towers.

At the end of the month the Association of Chief Police Officers should learn whether their application for £10m of lottery money from the

Millennium Commission has been successful.

Among the interactive displays planned for the centre, which will probably be based in London, is a helicopter, for visitors to experience a flight over London where a drowning man will be plucked from the River Thames. A car simulator will offer high-speed chases, and would-be stars of ITV's *The Bill* series will be able to orchestrate beat officers, riot police and armed-response vehicles from a mock-up of a police control room.

Visitors will be able to take part in a murder hunt and use the latest DNA and finger-print technology. Those wanting to track down the next Nick Leeson, who brought down Barings Bank last year, could sift through "cooked" books and pretend to be a fraud officer.

There will also be videos and information about drugs and the criminal justice system

and aspects of police history and notorious cases, such as the Dr Crippen murders, the Great Train Robbery, and the Kray brothers. Possible displays include the umbrella gun and pellet used to kill Georgi Markov, the Bulgarian defector who was stabbed in the leg in 1978 by a KGB agent in London.

Still under consideration is how to address issues such as race relations and youth culture.

The site of the old Bow Street police station in central London had been considered for the project, but it is believed to be too small. Alternative sites are being looked at. In addition to the main display the police propose to have an annual touring exhibition and a number of smaller mobile units. Sponsors have already been found to match any lottery money.

It is hoped the centre will be open by April 1999, in time for the millennium celebrations.



Eagle eye: Lone bird on the wing (left) and at rest; visitor with baby watching England's only nest (below)

Twitching to see eagles and egg

NICOLE VEASH

England's only breeding golden eagles have laid another egg in the Lake District colony they have inhabited for more than 25 years.

Hundreds of "twitchers" have arrived to catch a glimpse of the pair whose nest on a craggy ridge in the Riggindale Valley is guarded night and day by a warden from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Bird watchers will be keeping a close eye on the nest after the disappointment of the last four years, when none of the eggs laid was hatched.

Although the eagles have reared more than 15 young since 1969, they have all disappeared.



One of the eagles soars above the Lake District (left). Photograph: Tom Finnie And another at rest (above)

Riddle of dead goose, a dog and the MP

JOJO MOYES

Labour's former deputy leader, Roy Hattersley, is well used to the dog-eat-dog world of politics. But life can be much more troublesome, he has discovered, if your dog chooses to eat something else.

Mr Hattersley, a well-documented lover of animals, has been questioned by police over an allegation that his dog killed a goose in a royal park on Easter Monday.

According to police, the 63-year-old MP was walking the suspect, said to look like a Staffordshire bull terrier, in St James's Park, central London, when the goose was attacked and shaken violently by a dog of the same description.

A witness fetched an official in the park, between Westminster and Buckingham Palace, but when they returned the victim was dead.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman said: "Metropolitan police officers came across a grey lag goose lying on the South Lakeside Pathway in St James's Park at 8.15 on Monday morning. A park employee approached the officers and told them he had seen a Staffordshire bull terrier-type dog attack the bird.

"The witness gave a description of the dog and owner and the police spoke to a man soon afterwards at the junction of Buckingham Gate and Wilfred Street.

"Following further inquiries the officers made a report to the Royal Parks police for their consideration on whether to take further action," she added.

A Royal Parks police spokesman said it was "pursuing inquiries to decide whether a prosecution will follow in due course".

Staff at St James's Park said yesterday that had been instructed not to talk about the case because of the high-profile of the suspect's owner.

Royal parks regulations made it an offence to cause or permit any animal of which someone is in charge to chase, worry or injure any other animal or bird.

Dogs are allowed to be off leads in "certain areas" of the royal parks.

The MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook, who once spoke up in Parliament about "encouraging responsible dog ownership", could face a fine of up to £200 for breaking park regulations.

He was not available for comment yesterday.

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news

Farming debate: Attack on union bias and outdated policy

Organic farmers urged to quit NFU

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

A leader of Britain's organic farmers yesterday urged all of them to follow his example and *quit* the National Farmers' Union.

Patrick Holden, director of the Soil Association and British Organic Farmers, said an article by two NFU economists in yesterday's *Independent* was "the straw that broke the camel's back".

"I've now lost patience with the NFU - this is the latest example of them giving us only token support, of effectively damning us with faint praise," he said. The article, by Tom Maher and Simon Roberts, was in response to the *Independent* on Tuesday, when the entire comment page was devoted to the case for organic farming. That debate followed the BSE scare.

The NFU's economists argued that it would be "foolly" for all or most of Britain's farmers to switch to organic production, because there was no widespread demand for such produce and it would make them internationally uncompetitive.

Mr Holden, who has an organic farm near Lampeter in North Wales, said he had stayed in the NFU because it exerted a powerful influence on the Ministry of Agriculture and had shown some support for organic farming. Now it was clear that the union only saw this type of agriculture occupying a small niche, he said, never assuming a significant role.

An NFU spokeswoman regretted Mr Holden's decision. She said the union had no policy for how large organic farming should become in Britain, because that was down to the decisions of individual farmers meeting consumer demand.

Letters, page 18

Farming [which represents and services only organic producers]. With the kind of backing we're getting from the union that makes no sense for us or any other BOF member."

He will make his call in the next issue of *New Farmer and Grower*, but he wants to continue talking to the union because some of its senior office-holders are sympathetic.

BOF has 600 members, of whom more than half are with the NFU. Organic production covers just 0.3 per cent of Britain's total agricultural land, and most of the United Kingdom's organic food is imported.

The producers argue that the best of them can now produce yields close to those averaged by conventional farmers and growers, while minimising harm to the environment and creating safe food.

In 1989, BOF and the Soil Association announced their goal of raising this percentage area to 20 per cent by 2000, although the two now merged organisations admit they are unlikely to achieve it. Mr Holden said their estimate was that 5 per cent of existing British farms could now convert to organic farming profitably, but the great majority could not because existing European Union and government policies locked them into intensive farming.

The association promotes organic produce and certifies that it meets government and European standards for being pesticide and fertiliser-free.

An NFU spokeswoman regretted Mr Holden's decision. She said the union had no policy for how large organic farming should become in Britain, because that was down to the decisions of individual farmers meeting consumer demand.

Letters, page 18

'Tenants from hell' evicted

A family of 17, branded "the neighbours from hell", are to be evicted from their home after 500 complaints, a council said yesterday.

Mother-of-10 Kay Potts and her extended family were given 48 hours to leave their council house in Wythenshawe, Manchester, after a judge granted the city council a repossession order.

Mrs Potts was ordered to move out after Salford County Court heard a catalogue of complaints from outraged neighbours.

"Members of the family were chronically noisy, used abusive language and threatened violence towards their neighbours and were involved in vandalism and burglary," a Manchester city council spokeswoman said.

One neighbour, Gerard Ridings, 57, said yesterday: "To call them the neighbours from hell is an understatement. They're an evil lot."

Mr Ridings, a keen gardener, who had had bricks thrown at him, his greenhouse shattered, his home vandalised and his garage set on fire, said: "In the teeth of harassment and intimidation, these extraordinarily brave individuals were determined to appear in court to fight for themselves and their community," a council spokesman said.

One neighbour, Gerard Ridings, 57, said yesterday: "To call them the neighbours from hell is an understatement. They're an evil lot."

Mr Ridings, a keen gardener, who had had bricks thrown at him, his greenhouse shattered, his home vandalised and his garage set on fire, said: "In the teeth of harassment and intimidation, these extraordinarily brave individuals were determined to appear in court to fight for themselves and their community," a council spokesman said.

The council's policy was to find evicted families temporary accommodation while their case was reviewed to make it clear that families like the Potts must mend their ways, she said.

A spokesman for Mrs Potts's solicitor said she had no comment to make.

Three of their neighbours,

said: "Your patience snapped because of the loud music. Mr Batt was a self-centred, inconsiderate neighbour of the very worst kind ... I accept you were very heavily provoked." He added that Mr Vonck was "very lucky" to avoid prison.

Police found an air rifle with telescopic lenses and a antique shotgun, for which Mr Vonck had held an expired licence.

Mr Vonck was fined £4,500, plus £500 costs and given a six-month prison sentence suspended for two years.

Judge Michael Stuart-Moore

Neighbour's noise 'provoked' shots

A man who fired an air rifle at the home of a noisy neighbour was fined and given a suspended jail sentence at the Old Bailey yesterday.

William Vonck, 40, of Clapham, south London, who runs a property firm, "snapped" because of the loud music constantly played by Simon Batt, 32, who lived on the ninth floor of a tower block. Vonck fired at least eight pellets at Mr Batt's home, and allegedly cracked a window pane, the court was told.

Judge Michael Stuart-Moore



Food for thought: Ostriches at an Oxfordshire farm yesterday. The British flock has grown to 10,000 strong in less than decade

Ostrich investors panic as firm folds

NICHOLAS SCHOON

Britain's great ostrich investment bubble was deflating rapidly yesterday, with fraught investors jamming the phone line of a company under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office.

Nottinghamshire police have been called in by the SFO and another force is also expected to be involved in the inquiries into the Ostrich Farming Corporation, which is being wound up by the Department of Trade and Industry.

The BSE scare should be giving Britain's fast-growing ostrich farming industry its greatest boost as consumers seek an alternative red meat to beef. But instead, the closure of the Ostrich Farming Corporation (OFC), which has several thousand ostriches on farms in Belgium, is exposing how speculative the boom has been.

Ostrich meat has been much talked up as a new food for the next century - red fleshed with good texture and a pleasant, gamey taste which is much lower in fats and especially cholesterol than other red meats.

The composer Sir Andrew

Lloyd Webber has joined the rush, raising the huge, flightless birds on his estate near Ascot. While the British farmed flock has gone from zero to about 10,000 in less than a decade, it consists almost entirely of breeding stock. Very few have been killed for the pot.

The British Domesticated Ostriches Association, which represents the 300-plus farmers, says there is not yet one ostrich abattoir in Britain although there are plans for three.

The rapid growth of the breeding flock has been fuelled by the hope that the market would expand while the meat would continue to fetch the premium, novelty price of about £18 a pound. But while ostrich has found its way on to the menus of a few pubs and restaurants, but has failed to establish itself on the all-important supermarket shelves. And the gap between the price of good carcass (£450) and a live breeding bird (up to £14,000) looks enormous.

The Ostrich Farming Company offered investors the chance to buy ostriches of all ages - from chicks to breeding adults, and promised an annual

return of just over 50 per cent of their initial investment. It was an extremely attractive rate by any standards - based on them getting a guaranteed price for a guaranteed number of chicks produced by their breeders and was promoted through extensive advertising. It is these advertisements which are being investigated by the Advertising Standards Authority.

With hindsight, there were obvious warnings. The Securities and Investments Board warned that ownership of an ostrich was not regarded as an investment - and owners would not be entitled to the official Investors Compensation Scheme in the event of a collapse.

The board had looked into OFC's claims and passed a file to the Department of Trade and Industry, which last week asked the High Court for the firm to be wound up. The Official Receiver has been appointed as the provisional liquidator.

OFC's managing director Brian Ketchell used to run a video rental chain, Video Magic, which went into liquidation in 1991. Yesterday, he could not be contacted at the firm's offices in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

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of products are published in the Best Buys of '95 Guide and the What Buyers' Guide.

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Court battle: Student alleges negligence by top firm in UK

Solicitors sued over millionaire's will

JOJO MOYES

Britain's biggest firm of solicitors is being sued in the High Court next week for alleged negligence over the will of Belgravia property developer Eric Hopton.

Clifford Chance, which with 240 partners in 23 countries is also the second largest solicitors firm in the world, is being sued by 22-year-old university student Dominic Trusted, the great-nephew of Eric Hopton and a potential beneficiary of his will.

Among the witnesses expected to appear are George Staple, head of the Serious Fraud Office and former partner at Clifford Chance, and Rona, Lady Delves Broughton, whose father-in-law, Sir Jock Delves Broughton, was acquitted of murdering the Earl of Erroll in a case that inspired the 1987 film *White Mischief*.

The case revolves around



George Staple: Former partner at Clifford Chance

the multi-million pound estate left by Mr Hopton, who died in 1991 before completing a new will. Mr Hopton, whose Belgravia Property Company was sold for £45.5m to Elliott Bernard, owner of the Wentworth

Club, died aged 72 of a heart attack.

Mr Hopton had a younger brother John, who died in 1978 leaving two sons and a sister, Eileen, Dominic Trusted's mother. His will was not completed or signed and Mr Trusted, as a potential beneficiary, alleges negligence over the way in which the new will was handled. He is suing for more than £1m.

The defendants in the action are Clifford Chance and one of its partners, solicitor David Bowyer, who handled affairs relating to Mr Hopton's will. George Staple, a former partner in the firm, was Mr Hopton's solicitor in all other matters.

A separate but related action by Mr Hopton's close friend Rona, Lady Delves Broughton, which was also begun in December 1993, has been discontinued.

Lady Delves Broughton, 55, a Lloyd's of London council

member, was a director of Mr Hopton's property company and nursed him through his final illness. He and her late husband, Sir Evelyn Delves Broughton, had been friends at Eton.

She dropped her action, which was claiming £500,000 over the uncompleted will, earlier this month. Her solicitors, Goodman Derrick, said yesterday that she had "made a contribution" of £175,000 to Clifford Chance's costs.

Perry Simson, a partner at Clifford Chance, said yesterday: "We have been advised by counsel and the solicitors acting for us that the claim will fail and that it will be vigorously contested."

Mr Trusted, a student at Edinburgh University, is receiving legal aid to fight the court action. He declined to comment yesterday.

The case, which begins in the High Court next Tuesday, is expected to last three weeks.

Tumim attacks Howard on jail reform

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Prison officers will be placed at even greater risk of violence, injury – and even death – by the Home Secretary's latest law and order package, the former Chief Inspector of Prisons warned yesterday.

In an outspoken attack on last week's White Paper announcing sweeping reforms to sentencing, Judge Stephen Tumim condemned as "a very dangerous doctrine" plans to abolish automatic remission and parole and replace it with continuous assessment by prison officers.

And he echoed the concerns of Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice, by describing plans for minimum and mandatory life sentences for a range of offenders as a "denial of justice". It was forcing independent judges to become mere tools of the Government, he said. "It will mean overcrowding, great expense and a widening of the gap between the classes of our society rather than an attempt to help prisoners lead law-abiding lives."

Judge Tumim lost his contract as the guardian of prisoners' rights and conditions last November, because of what insiders described as a head-on clash with Michael Howard.

Yesterday it became clear that his removal had not silenced one of Mr Howard's most effective critics. He chose a book launch in London to speak out. He said: "If you are not going to get parole or remission then you might as well beat up or murder a prison officer."

"What is worrying me is that continuous assessment is going to cause extremely bad relations, allegations of racism, of favouritism, of support by officers of snobs by one prisoner against another. Nothing could be worse for prison discipline than that."

The judge rejected Government claims that the tough new measures were simply a response to overwhelming public demand for action against crime. "Everybody always says the public wants tougher treatment of prisoners, rougher treatment of prisoners, nastier treatment of prisoners."

"I don't know what the public wants, but I suspect what it wants is to see justice done."



On the right track: Emma and Richard Carroll at the entrance to one of the 'family carriages' being set aside by Great Western Trains on selected train journeys from London to Wales and the South-west so that families can play and relax in freedom

news

Ex-care staff call for abuse inquiry

ROGER DOBSON

Staff who worked at one of the biggest homes involved in the North Wales child abuse scandal yesterday backed calls for a full public inquiry.

Care staff who worked at the Bryn Estyn Home in Wrexham Clwyd, where two senior staff were convicted of abuse, say anything short of a full inquiry would be unacceptable.

"The internal inquiry was doomed to failure because, as many of us foresaw, there would be problems over publication because of the legal issues involved," said a spokeswoman who worked at the home for 10 years.

The move by former staff comes amid growing concern that a 300-page report following a two-year investigation by three leading child care specialists will never be published.

It makes a series of recommendations to prevent a recurrence of the kind of events which in Clwyd led to years of abuse for as many as 200 young people. Several child care agencies, including Childline and NCH Action For Children, want the report published so that lessons can be learned.

William Hague, the Secretary of State for Wales, will face a barrage of demands both for publication of the report and for a public inquiry from Labour's health spokesman in Wales, Rhodri Morgan, when the minister returns from leading a trade mission to the United States at the end of this week.

The Clwyd affair also raises important issues over the status of reports of investigations into abuse claims. Some agencies believe that they should be given a status which guarantees indemnity against libel or other legal action.

Staff who worked at Bryn Estyn, which closed in 1984, say they have been concerned for some time about the issues surrounding child care in North Wales. Because of the pressure the staff felt, a support group has been set up offering help, advice and counselling to those under pressure.

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news

France wins UK defence deal

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

The French government is to acquire a majority share in the manufacture of vital equipment for Britain's "independent" nuclear deterrent in a new deal struck by French, British and Australian defence contractors. Although the arrangement is a purely commercial one, it gives new impetus to Franco-British co-operation on nuclear strategy, which could develop into a future European nuclear force.

A new company called Thomson Marconi Sonar (TMS), with 3,500 employees in Britain, France and Australia, will be the second largest supplier of sonar equipment in the world. The new company will be based in France and the French government-owned firm of Thomson-CSF will own 50 per cent of the shares. The British firm GEC-Marconi will own the rest. The new company will supply all the sonar equipment for the British and French submarine fleets -

including the 16,000 tonne British Vanguard class submarines which carry US-built Trident missiles. Two of the submarines are already in service. Two more will become operational in 1997 and 1999. New sonar equipment added to vessels in refit will be provided by TMS.

The deal also means Britain will have an almost identical share in the sonar of the new French Triomphant class ballistic missile-firing submarines, the first of which enters service later this year.

Denis Ranque, who will head the new company, said: "The acoustic signature of the submarines is a very sensitive matter to the French and British governments but we have satisfied them we can maintain the necessary secrecy."

Discussions on Franco-British cooperation in nuclear strategy have in the past focused on agreed patrol areas and technical collaboration on future torpedo-firing submarines. The new company has made that co-operation a reality.



Wings of desire: This is how Gormley's steel angel will appear to motorists on the A1. Photograph: Gateshead Council

£500,000 grant for steel angel

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

The fiercely opposed project to erect a 60ft tall steel angel overlooking Gateshead has won more than half a million pounds in lottery funding. Lord Gowrie, the chairman of the Arts Council, will announce today.

He will be in Tyneside this morning to announce a grant of £584,000 - a move which will earn him the cordial dislike, if not opprobrium, of most residents of the town.

The angel is the inspiration of Antony Gormley, who won the Turner Prize for works such as *Field*, a sea of 40,000 clay figures, *Testing a World View*, in which five iron figures were shaped into positions, and a 1988 work, a bed made from 6,000 slices of bread.

His plan to erect the statue, with a wing-span of 150ft, on the site of a former coal mine was put forward in a public art competition run by Labour-controlled Gateshead council. The cost of the work - orig-

inally £250,000, but now more than £300,000 - and its dominating size have aroused the town's ire. More than £150,000 is coming from the European Regional Development Fund and a further £45,000 from Northern Arts in Newcastle.

Last year, 4,000 people signed a petition objecting to it, even though the Arts Council, European sources and Northern Arts, rather than the council, will be paying the bill.

Kathy King, a Liberal councillor, is one of those fighting to get the council to drop the scheme. "Quite frankly, it will be a monument to the stupidity of the council here in Gateshead, and you can quote me every word, pet, because people here do not want that statue," she said yesterday.

Mr Gormley himself says the work will symbolise the spirit of the North-east. It will be visible throughout Tyneside and will be a landmark for anyone driving up from the south on the A1. It is expected it will be finished by March next year.

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IND 22

Fear of ridicule keeps 'tough' boys from help

GLENDIA COOPER

Boys who have been brutally ill-treated are refusing to get help because they believe they must be tough and keep any worries to themselves, according to a new survey published by the charity ChildLine.

Despite talk of the "New Man", the macho stereotype persists and boys who do speak of their problems fear being ridiculed as weak wimps.

The report, *We Know it's Tough to Talk*, is based on a sample of the 16,505 boys who contacted the helpline in 1994-5 and a questionnaire carried out in secondary schools. The charity has also launched a campaign with the London Monarchs, Britain's only American football team, encouraging boys to call.

Four times as many girls as boys call ChildLine, and more than five times as many girls of 11-15 than boys.

Mary MacLeod, research director for ChildLine, said the proportion of boys calling with such serious problems that they had to be referred to police or social services was much higher than that of girls. Among boys, 18 per cent called about physical abuse, 17 per cent

about bullying, 11 per cent about sexual abuse and 8 per cent about sexuality. In comparison girls called about a wider range of concerns, most frequently bullying or family problems, and proportionally fewer because of physical abuse.

Boys told of attempted strangulation, being thrown downstairs, beaten around the head and stabbed. "Steve", 13, said his father frequently got into a rage and hit him around the head, dragged him by his hair and pushed him downstairs. He added that because he was blind his father would move objects so that he fell over them. And "Simon", 15, told ChildLine that the previous day his stepfather had beaten him with a metal rod and broken his arm.

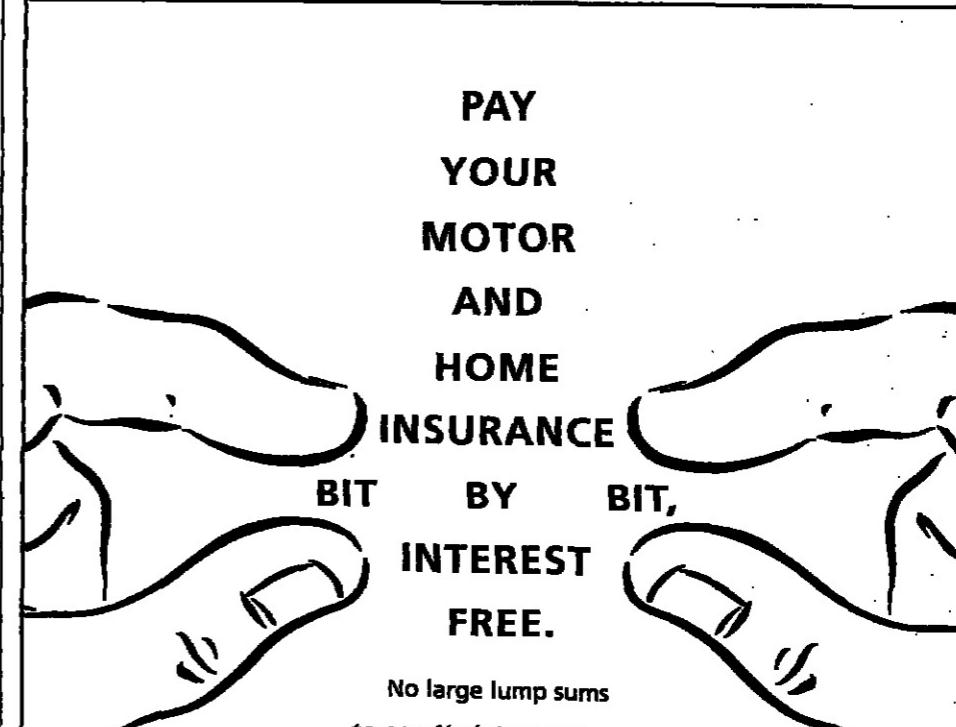
"Assaults like these are criminal offences ... But for children the possibility of getting help or of the violence ending seems remote," Ms MacLeod said. Both girls and boys talked of their feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and low self-esteem. But boys were more likely to speak of anger and destructive behaviour, and were much more likely to be self-critical about having a problem at all, feeling that a "real" boy would have prevented or stopped bullying or assaults.

In the school survey, based on 1,453 completed questionnaires, 17 per cent thought it was acceptable for girls to get upset but boys should be tough. Half (51 per cent) said boys found it harder to talk than girls.

"Stereotyping seems to reach its height in adolescence when boys feel under great pressure to show they are tough," Esther Rantzen, chairwoman of ChildLine, said. "... But the 71 per cent increase in suicide by young men in the past 10 years shows how dangerous it can be to bottle up distress."

ChildLine (free): 0800 1111.

■ Young people must be taken much more seriously if the Church of England is to widen its appeal into the next century, a report produced by the General Synod's board of education warned yesterday. The church is failing to recognise the potential of under-25s in playing an active part in the Christian community, according to the report, *Youth A Part*. It says traditional services and styles of worship risk excluding young people, and calls for youth to be allowed to share in the leadership of flexible creative worship.



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Watchdog
for 'Net'

DAILY PO

WH Smith relents on 'top-shelf' magazines

LOUISE JURY

WH Smith's wholesale arm is giving newsagents the option to refuse to stock "adult" magazines after a campaign against the top-shelf sales by some retailers.

The high street chain's wholesale division will ask newsagents to "opt in" to the sales in future after complaints that soft porn material was being forced on retailers who did not want it.

WH Smith News distributes magazines and newspapers in a "box-out" system, under which a pre-packed selection of items is sent to 20,000 independent customers.

Although newsagents can elect not to receive adult magazines, some claimed their wishes were not being respected and Hamdy Shabean launched a protest campaign from his shop in Stoke Newington, north London. At its peak the opposition gained support from 500 other shops.

The company, one of three wholesalers dominating the market, said yesterday it hoped the modification to the distribution procedure would meet the objections.

A spokeswoman said: "There's been a lot of criticism weighed against us. We thought we'd clarify the matter once and for all to make sure we don't inflict these magazines on people who don't want them." Other magazines would be selected and sent to the newsagents instead, she said.

Mr Shabean welcomed the move as a "step forward" but said pressure was being still placed upon newsagents to accept the top-shelf material.

He accused WH Smith of stressing the good profits to be made, up 10 per cent on last year, in order to persuade

retailers to accept some of nearly 90 adult magazines on the company's lists.

"We're looking for total freedom of choice so that if the retailer doesn't want these magazines he doesn't have to have them. It's been proved that these magazines are harmful and degrading to women and not good for children."

Mr Shabean, whose business has folded since he began his protest six years ago, but plans to continue the campaign, said newsagents were left with no choice because only one wholesaler covered any particular area of the country. He claimed it was not possible to deal with anyone other than WH Smith in north London.

Brigitte Faubert, legislative officer of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents, said that although individual newsagents were supposed to have the right to refuse material, in practice they had limited negotiating rights.

The wholesaler "boxed out" to the retailers a selection that they had to accept or risk losing the supply. This left newsagents paying for magazines which in some cases they knew they could not sell, would return a month later and have to wait at least a further month before getting their money back.

The top-shelf magazines are an additional problem. They have to pay for this material which is against their beliefs and it makes them a front line target for anybody coming in and asking they are displaying this filth," she said.

The federation has asked the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate the grip on the wholesale market by WH Smith, John Menzies and Surridge Dawson.

Censoring top shelf, page 19

Watchdog calls for 'Net' gains

GLENDA COOPER

A network of public computer kiosks, similar to the payphone system, should be set up to make sure the less well-off are not excluded from the information revolution, a consumer watchdog said yesterday.

The National Consumer Council wants "PC boxes" put into libraries, hospitals and community centres, so that people afford to afford a computer can surf the Internet.

It can cost a minimum of £700 plus VAT for an IBM-compatible personal computer and around £150 a year to link up to information services providing access to the Internet. Less than a quarter of UK households have a computer.

The telecommunications watchdog Ofcom has already proposed extending universal service in telecommunications to cover multi-media facilities in schools for five to sixteen-year-olds. The NCC wants these proposals extended to all consumers in public access points, with special facilities for the housebound.

A version of this idea exists in the Cambridge area. The Cambridge On-Line project,

sponsored by the local cable company and the Internet service provider Pipex, has six terminals across the city. Addenbrookes hospital also allows access to council services, local voluntary groups and the Internet as a whole.

Ruth Evans, NCC director, said: "We are living through a technological revolution with telecoms, broadcasting and computing converging fast. The information society could bring untold benefits - access to information, advice and educational services locally, nationally and internationally.

"However, regulation has not kept pace with the changes. We need a more effective regulatory structure to ensure open access, full choice, fair prices and adequate consumer protection."

Barclays and Lloyds banks will shortly introduce 50 kiosks where people will pay to surf the Internet and receive e-mail.

Eva Pascoe, training director and co-founder of the Cyberia cafes, said: "It's good idea in principle. A kiosk would be OK if all you wanted was stupid, mindless touch-screen shopping, but there is no easy way to get round the Internet at the moment without training."

DAILY POEM

Halstat

By Richard Ray

I remember Halstat. It clings
by its finger-tips
to the towering peaks of the Dachstein,
its feet lost in the black,

silent waters of the lake.
Sailed houses paddled
in the shallows, their legs
perfumed and blackened with age.

A shaft of light falls
on the decorated homes
of the townspeople.

A fountain splashed
by the bone-house where
painted skulls and thigh-bones lay
in the gloom of the cave-like crypt.

Richard Ray is 13 and comes from Newcastle-under-Lyme. He won a special award for this poem, written two years ago for the 1995 W H Smith Young Writers' Competition in the 9- to 12-age group. The collected winning entries appear in *Electric Full Stop*, published by Macmillan Children's Books at £4.99. Details for entry to the 1997 Young Writers' Competition will appear tomorrow.



Hostage to fortune: A scene from the Royal Opera House's production of 'Nabucco'

Photograph: Clive Barda

Chorus of disapproval
Hamson Blitwistle's *Gawain*, Royal Opera House, London, 1994; led by composer campaigning against avant-garde *Das Rheingold*, ROH, 1994; the latex suits and tippers in Richard Jones's production.

The audience was incensed by the way the director, Tim Albery, had interpreted the early Verdi masterpiece telling the Biblical story of King Nebuchadnezzar - Nabucco.

The boos were an identical reaction to his first staging of the opera, which Albery directed at the Welsh National Opera last September.

The opera is set in the sixth century BC, when the Babylonian ruler Nabucco sacked Jerusalem, and carried the Jews into exile, but then, after being struck mad by God, allowed them to return home.

In a deliberate floating of conventions, Albery dressed the Israelite women as Victorian prostitutes in ballgowns and the men as early 20th century middle-European Jews. The chorus crawled around the stage daubed with luminous paint, while soldiers in combat fatigues peevishly brandished plastic guns.

The distinguished conductor Sir Edward Downes withdrew before the first night because he was "out of sympathy" with the production.

A Royal Opera House spokeswoman said the opera, a co-production with WNO, would not be cancelled. "That would disappoint a lot of people who have booked and are coming to the performances."

news

Albery puts the boo into Nabucco

MARIANNE MACDONALD and DANIEL ROSEMAN

The embattled Royal Opera House yesterday pledged to continue with its production of *Nabucco* despite the chorus of catcalls and boos which greeted its first night on Tuesday.

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news



Lisa Leeson: A flying start

Virgin signs up Lisa Leeson

Lisa Leeson, the wife of the disgraced former Barings trader Nick Leeson, has landed a job as a stewardess with Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic airline.

Mrs Leeson, 27, who lives with her parents at West Kingsdown in Kent, is due to begin her training as a junior flight attendant next month.

Announcing its new appointment yesterday, Virgin Atlantic said that Mrs Leeson's successful application was "based on her own merits, personal and skills".

It said that initially, she will fly on trans-Atlantic routes and, "as with all new Virgin Atlantic Airways cabin crew, needs to complete six months service before qualifying for concessionary Virgin Atlantic flights and one year before receiving discounts on other carriers".

At the time of her application it was believed Mrs Leeson wanted to become a stewardess so as to be able to make more regular and cheaper trips to Singapore to visit her husband.

Speaking at the Elizabeth Tea Rooms in Maidstone, Kent, where she has worked as a part-time waitress since returning to England a year ago, Mrs Leeson said she has yet to inform her husband, who is in prison in Singapore, about her new job. "He knows that I have applied for a job but I only found out yesterday myself so I've yet to tell him."

"I will be sorry to leave here and I'm sure there'll be tears when I leave," she joked. "I don't know anything about a leaving do, but I'm sure we'll be having a leaving cuppa."

Inner-city violence: Birmingham counts cost of trouble as inquiry into Bradford clashes rejects 19 complaints.

Bid to end feud over parking

Senior officers were hoping for "constructive dialogue" with community leaders yesterday after police had been stoned by youths in a long-running feud over parking restrictions.

Trouble flared in Alum Rock Road, in the Saltley area of Birmingham, on Tuesday night after the arrest earlier in the day of three men who allegedly intervened as an officer issued a fixed-penalty parking ticket.

More than 200 Asian youths surrounded the city's Digbeth police station, and later walked through the streets throwing missiles at police and stoning buses and passing vehicles. One officer suffered minor injuries.

A 20-year-old man has been charged with assaulting a police officer and affray and was due to appear before magistrates.

Officers, led by Superintendent Roger Conway, met six community leaders and councillors in the predominantly Asian neighbourhood in a bid to resolve the problem quickly.

Divisional Commander Col in Macdonald said: "We will be talking about the reasons behind the events and how they can be resolved. We are hoping to have a constructive dialogue with the community."



Under siege: Riot police regroup outside a shattered shop front on Birmingham's Alum Rock Road on Tuesday evening

Photograph: Ceters

Traffic police stop chief at 90mph

A police chief was stopped by his own officers after they clocked him speeding down a motorway at 90mph.

Cambridgeshire Chief Constable Ben Gunn was issued with a fixed penalty notice after being stopped by traffic officers on the M11 on Saturday.

In a statement yesterday Mr Gunn, secretary of the Association of Chief Police Officers' terrorism committee, said: "I naturally very much regret that a lapse of concentration resulted in me exceeding the speed limit. I was correctly reported for the offence. I have informed the police authority."

A police spokesman said that Mr Gunn was stopped at 8.50am while driving his Rover 620 south on the Cambridgeshire stretch of the M11, which has a 70mph limit. Mr Gunn was off-duty and pulled over when signalled to do so.

Being issued with a fixed penalty notice obliged Mr Gunn to pay a fine, in the region of £30 to £40. His licence will be endorsed with three points.

The incident is to be discussed at the next month's Cambridge police authority meeting.

Mr Gunn, 52, was appointed Chief Constable in January 1994 after a time as deputy.

Councillor Ed Murphy, Labour spokesman on the authority, said the incident had to be kept in proportion. "My opinion is that it shouldn't endanger his position. It's an unfortunate incident, but it does clearly demonstrate the police officers in Cambridgeshire are acting without favour."



Mr Gunn: Regrets lapse

Police cleared of blame for riots

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

civil action against the West Yorkshire police force.

For three nights last summer several hundred Asian youths held running street battles with police in which petrol bombs, bricks and bottles were thrown.

The trouble had apparently started after the arrests of two youths for allegedly obstructing a footpath while playing football.

Forty-one people were arrested after the disturbances.

The PCA, which oversaw an investigation by officers from the West Midlands police force, said it had decided that no officers would be disciplined. One officer involved in the first arrests is to receive advice and re-training after the PCA said he

had used the wrong powers to detain a suspect.

Nineteen complaints were examined, of which eight were dropped and two were not investigated. One case involved an Asian woman who said she and her baby had been jostled by police and her clothes torn.

PCA member Caroline Mitchell said: "The allegations which were made were very serious and the public concern is understandable and widespread, but unjustifiable public disorder resulted. It is our conclusion that these allegations were without foundation."

Ms Mitchell stressed that the PCA placed particular emphasis on independent witness and medical and forensic reports. She added: "There's no question of a cover up - we are not frightened to take action."

PCA inquiries have been consistently attacked over the years for not being objective because they rely on police officers to investigate other officers.

Aurangzeb Iqbal, solicitor for two of the Asian youths who made complaints, said that his clients were taking civil action.

Javed Iqbal, 20, and a juvenile who cannot be named, appeared before Bradford magistrates last September charged with threatening behaviour and assault. Both were cleared.

Mr Iqbal said the decision

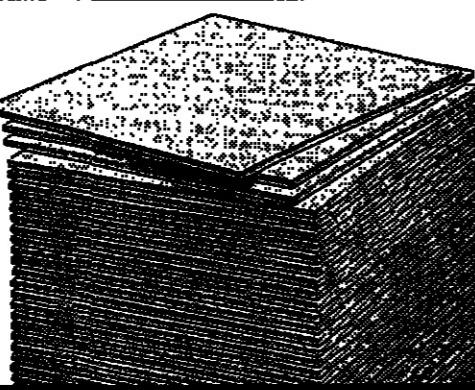
that one officer is to be retrained proved the grievances were not without foundation.

"The PCA should have gone much further, but at least this proves it was not a complete whitewash and I do not think there will be a backlash from the community," he said.

Mohammed Ajeeb, a local councillor and former mayor of the Bradford, said the report was disappointing. "It's not a question of anyone shouldering the blame; it's a question of perception," he said. "There is a belief that when the police deal with ethnic minorities they are not fair, and that perception has not changed."

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Sound waves clue to the rotation of the sun

Astronomy Conference:
The Sun's 'breathing' has
been captured by science

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

The Sun is ringing like a celestial bell and, by "listening" to the sound reverberating through it, scientists from Birmingham University believe that its core may be rotating more slowly than it did a decade ago.

At the National Astronomy Meeting in Liverpool yesterday, Dr Yvonne Elsworth said that information about the stellar interior came from listening to the Sun in "breathing mode" — where the surface of the whole star moves in and out, rather as someone's chest expands and contracts as they inhale and exhale.

Researchers had once believed that the core of the Sun rotated twice or three times as fast as the outer surface layers, Dr Elsworth said, but observations of the sound-waves resonating within the Sun showed that the interior was in step with the surface.

Using BISON, the Birmingham Solar Oscillation Network, the researchers can measure how the surface of the Sun moves in and out to a precision of one part in a hundred billion.

Ironically, none of the measuring instruments are located in Britain. "The weather is not good enough in Britain," Dr Elsworth said. "Our brightest day is appalling."

The BISON network consists of six instruments around the world: in Tenerife; South Africa; Western and Eastern Australia; Chile and California. "Chile is brilliant," Dr Elsworth said.

In principle, BISON is rather like the British Empire and

the Sun should never set on it, but in practice, Dr Elsworth said, the researchers get measurements for about 80 per cent of the time.

According to Dr Bill Chaplin, one of Dr Elsworth's colleagues in the Department of Physics and Space Science at the University, the researchers have been re-analysing the good quality data recorded since 1981.

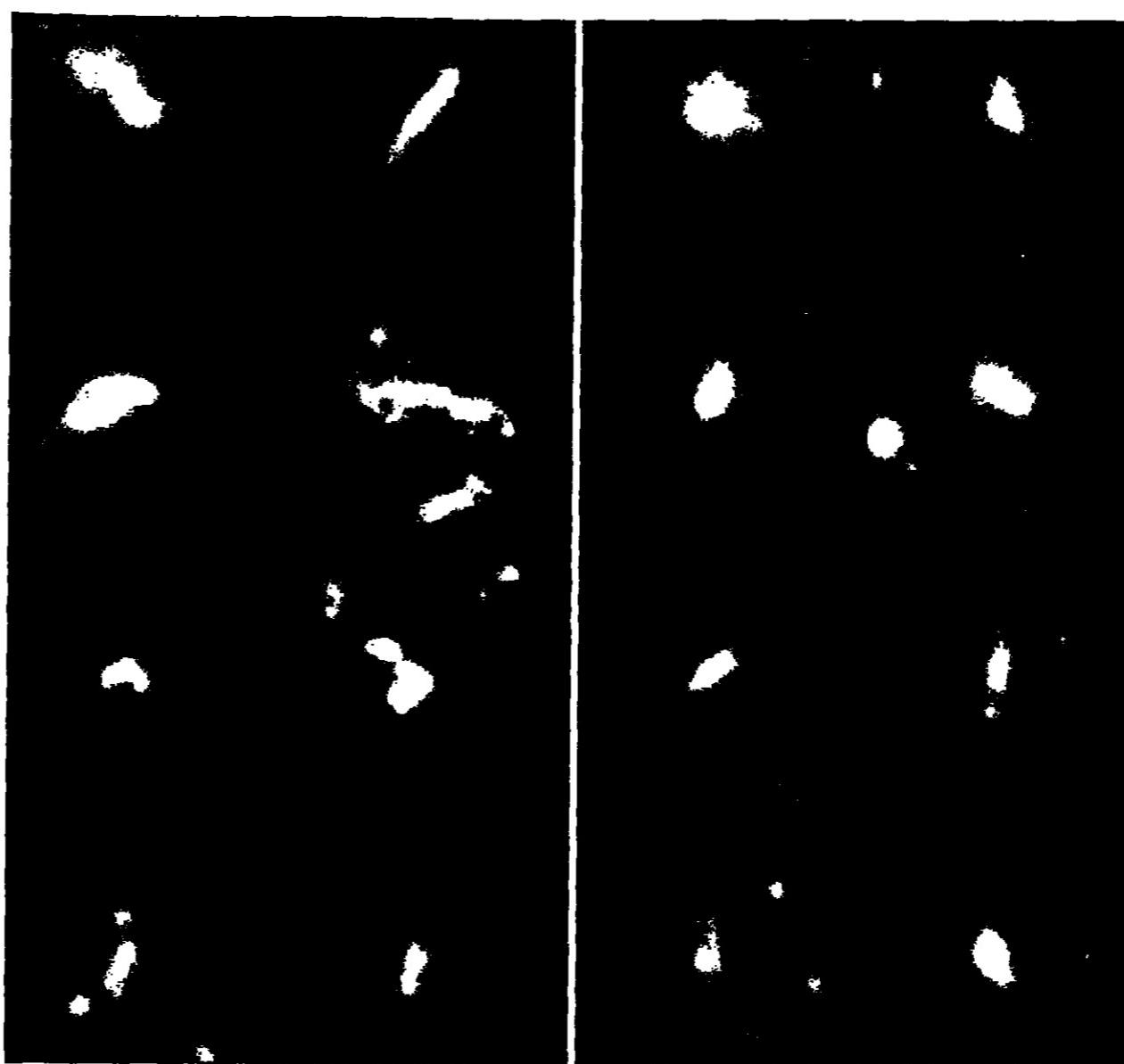
"We have found that perhaps there may be tentative evidence for the core rotation rate having decreased since 1981."

Although there is a well-known 11-year solar cycle — linked among other things to sunspot activity, there is also a less well known 22-year cycle in magnetic activity in the Sun and any decrease in the core rotation rate may be linked with this, Dr Chaplin speculated.

The Sun as a whole is spinning much more slowly than younger stars are known to do, and it is thought that the braking mechanism is a form of magnetic drag connected with the stream of charged sub-atomic particles being ejected in the solar wind.

Dr Chaplin stressed, however, that the data were only revealing hints of a core slowdown. "We need more data. You need good coverage to beyond the year 2000," he said.

Dr Chaplin believes the results from BISON may also help solve the long-standing "solar neutrino problem" — experiments on Earth are detecting only about a third of the quantity of a particularly exotic sub-nuclear particle, the neutrino, that nuclear theory would



THE INDEPENDENT
Gazing into the beginning of time

Back to the future: How the Independent broke the story of Hubble's view of the birth of the stars

Hubble vision shapes up

Astronomers believe they are closer to understanding the weird shapes of distant galaxies revealed earlier this year in a picture of the uttermost limits of the visible universe taken by the Hubble space telescope, writes Tom Wilkie.

The photographs (left) show two of the different types pictured by Hubble — the puzzling irregular objects at the left, with spiral galaxies (broadly similar to our own Milky Way) at the right.

Professor Richard Ellis, of the Institute of Astronomy at Cambridge, told the National Astronomy meeting in Liver-

pool yesterday that a large proportion of the objects in the Hubble deep field survey — the more distant and therefore "younger" galaxies — bore little resemblance to closer galaxies.

Astronomers are debating, he said, as to whether the furthest images might be only fragments of galaxies coming together — many of the irregular lumps may be part of a merging process.

Most of the distant galaxies appear knotty in shape and are involved in star formation. The Hubble pictures are telling astronomers that galaxy formation is a continuous process, Professor Ellis said.

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Forces inquiry turns to farce in Canada

HUGH WINSOR
Ottawa

What started as an inquiry into how a handful of low-ranking Canadian soldiers on peacekeeping duties in Somalia beat and tortured a teenage prisoner to death three years ago has turned into a farce in which all 100,000 military and civilian personnel in the Canadian Armed Forces were ordered to devote 24 hours this week to a futile search for missing documents and computer tapes.

All military planes were grounded, all weapons were downed, and all non-essential operations were suspended on orders from the Chief of Defence Staff, General Jean Boyle, after the head of a civilian inquiry reported that several crucial communications logs covering the activities of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia were missing. It also appeared that top-secret computer tapes at National Defence headquarters covering the same period had been erased.

The missing records and tapes pointed to an attempt at a high-level cover-up of the circumstances surrounding the killing of the teenager and an-

other shooting incident during the Somalia mission in March 1993.

These events have turned into a major embarrassment for Canada, which claims to have originated the idea of United Nations peace-keeping following the Anglo-French invasion of the Suez Canal zone in 1956, and which has participated in most UN peace-keeping operations since.

But the senior officers in the Canadian Armed Forces were looking even more like the gang who couldn't shoot straight yesterday when the day spent pawing through filing cabinets produced no missing files and Canadian media had a field day with stories and pictures of military personnel involved in a treasure hunt.

Even military chaplains and a civilian barber working at defence headquarters were asked to go through their files but an exception was made for the approximately 1,000 soldiers on duty around Corail in Bosnia.

Several computer technicians have added to the embarrassment by casting doubt on the theory about erasures, claiming General Boyle, knew of the attempted cover-up and approved.

been caused by faulty programming. "If silly Keystone Cops type of things like this are going to carry on, it's time we got an investigation that brings out the truth," said one critic yesterday.

General Boyle's house-cleaning order has been widely seen as an effort at damage control, to divert attention from accusations that he and other senior officers knew about the cover-up and had approved of it.

A corporal and two privates have already been convicted in military court of offences connected with the torture and beating to death of the teenager. But the judicial inquiry is looking into the broader question of the training and preparation of the Airborne regiment for the Somalia assignment, given that it was known to have discipline problems and also into what happened at defence headquarters when senior officers first learned of the torture death and another shooting.

A colonel who is now facing court-martial for destroying or altering some of the relevant documents has said his seniors, including General Boyle, knew of the attempted cover-up and approved.



Cold front: A huge drifting iceberg looms over Fort Amherst, in the narrows of St John's Harbour, Newfoundland

Photograph: Jonathan Hayward

Britons dodge bullets to reach airlift from Liberia

CLAUDIA MCELROY
Reuters

Freetown — Civilians fleeing the fighting in Liberia's embattled capital, Monrovia, yesterday described how they had dodged death during a four-day ordeal before helicopters airlifted them to safety.

"The whole town was on the move. Thousands of refugees were on the streets and we could hear mortars and heavy artillery," said a Briton, David Wood-Roberts, who works for a British telecommunications company. "We grabbed all we could. There was danger from stray bullets whizzing everywhere."

Some civilians got out on a UN helicopter on Monday while others left on a US airlift.

"There was shooting everywhere. Women were crying.

We were bracing ourselves to be shot," said another Briton, Wendy White.

The fighting, triggered by efforts to arrest a warlord on charges of murder on Saturday, brought fears of a return to the full-scale civil war, which in six years has killed more than 150,000 people. Until last weekend, the capital, patrolled by West African peace-keepers, was something of a safe haven.

Ms White, Mr Wood-Roberts and other evacuees said there was widespread looting and terrified civilians had fled for their lives or had hid in their homes. "All the electrical shops and supermarkets in the city centre were looted and all pick-up trucks were taken to transport the stolen goods," Mr Wood-Roberts said.

"We were very fortunate to get out with our lives," said an American businessman, Rob Lewis, who came out on the US helicopter airlift. "The first rebel faction came through. They continued to loot and then people started getting killed."

He and his wife were among 104 Americans and other foreign nationals ferried out of the city after the US airlift began on Tuesday.

Mr White and Mr Wood-Roberts said they heard reports of foreigners laying on floors in their homes to escape stray bullets. In one compound, wives hid in wardrobes from gunmen who withdrew after their husbands paid them to go away.

Mr White and Mr Wood-Roberts were among foreigners in a hotel in the Sinkor district where the fighting began on Saturday, after the council of state ordered Roosevelt Johnson's arrest on charges of murder, after a militia clash.

Police and militiamen loyal to Charles Taylor, the man who launched the civil war in 1989, and a rival faction leader, Al-haji Kromah, a fellow council member, laid siege to Johnson's home, triggering the clashes.

Ghanaians from the West African peace-keeping force rushed Mr White and Mr Wood-Roberts to a UN base in a 12-mile dash by car.

A fragile truce held in Monrovia yesterday and hundreds of fugitive civilians defied the sporadic shooting and prowling militia fighters to try to reach home.

Civilians in the city centre barracks, where Johnson was holed up with fighters from his Krahn tribe, said they were

free to leave but afraid to venture out. They said about 30 West African peace-keepers held hostage had been freed but 36 Lebanese civilians had not.

Under Tuesday night's ceasefire agreement, Johnson agreed to release several hundred civilians and peace-keepers being held hostage by his forces.

"People want to leave but they are still concerned about their personal safety outside the barracks," Mark Johnson, one of several thousand civilians inside, said by telephone.

Witnesses said hundreds of the 15,000 people sheltering in a US embassy annex had left, saying that if they had to die they preferred to die at home.

Intensive negotiations took place among the peace-keepers, faction leaders and the council of state to build on the ceasefire agreement.

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Ottawa

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Protests sour China's \$1.7bn Airbus deal

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

An Airbus contract worth up to \$1.7bn (£1.1bn), a vociferous protest by activists from Amnesty International found yesterday when they tried to unfurl a giant protest banner across the Champs Elysées.

For France's human rights groups, Mr Li's visit is a shameful example of how France's right-wing government, and President Chirac in particular, is prepared to sacrifice principle to the hope of financial advantage. They are joined by opposition MPs, who claim that the late president François Mitterrand was tougher on China's human rights record than Mr Chirac appears to be, and by several trade unions, who object to violation of trade union rights in China (but also to the potential competition from cheap Chinese labour).

This united front has forced the government on to the defensive. Yesterday evening, as the only authorised demonstration was gathering half a mile away, the French prime minister, Alain Juppé, went to meet Mr Li at the foreign ministry rather than receiving him at his official residence. The signing of the Airbus deal so

remains of what had been planned as a three-nation European tour. The visit, which was curtailed but not cancelled, is the first by a Chinese head of government for 12 years and only the second by a Chinese leader since the Tiananmen Square killings seven years ago.

Mr Li's reputation as the man largely responsible for ordering the army attack on Tiananmen makes him a difficult visitor in the West and there has been a crescendo of protest in France, culminating in yesterday's protest and march.

Security considerations have dictated that for his three days in Paris, Mr Li is being confined to a small, easily policed area close to the Elysée. Forests of metal barriers are much in ev-

idence. So are large reserves of riot police, as activists from Amnesty International found yesterday when they tried to unfurl a giant protest banner across the Champs Elysées.

Government ministers have justified the visit as a chance for France to start catching up on its European partners, the US and Japan, in the race to win a stake in the Chinese market. Handicapped partly by existing defence contracts with Taiwan, France is only the 11th largest exporter to China worldwide, with 1.7 per cent of the market.

Under the agreement signed yesterday, China will buy 10 A320 Airbuses, with the possibility of another 30, and three A340s. If the whole deal comes to fruition, it is the biggest contract China has awarded to a European aircraft builder.

Questions were being asked about the value of other agreements. A contract due to be signed for the establishment of a Ciroën plant in Wuhan is to be financed largely with French credits. In addition, a number of hoped-for deals on gas distribution, electric cables and wheat exports were reported not to have been finalised.



Paris match: Protesters from the human rights group Amnesty International marching on the Champs-Elysées in protest at the visit of Chinese premier, Li Peng

Andreotti trial put on hold until after election

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

After more than six months of painfully slow progress in the Mafia trial of Giulio Andreotti, Italy's most prominent post-war politician, a Palermo court yesterday decided to scrap the proceedings altogether and start afresh on 15 May because of the prolonged illness of one of the presiding judges.

The decision was an embarrassing setback to what was supposed to be Italy's "trial of the century". It reinforced a growing impression that the charges against Mr Andreotti are so explosive that no court will ever have the courage to reach a verdict.

The trial was rescheduled ostensibly as the result of bad luck. Vincenzo Massa, picked to sit on the president's bench as one of two deputy judges, is suffering from an eye infection and has been involved in a serious car crash. Her absence has halted proceedings since early January.

But the procrastination presented Judge Massa's illness. From the start, hearings took place only every fortnight, and focused mostly on points of procedure. Mr Andreotti, who is accused of being Cosa Nostra's political godfather in Rome, says he wants to clear his name as quickly as possible. But even the most optimistic forecasts suggest he will have to wait until the end of the decade for a final verdict, by which time he will be over 80.

The man who remained in government uninterrupted for 46 years and served as prime minister seven times also faces a second trial, due to start today, for the murder of an investigative journalist, Mino Pecorelli, in 1979. But this trial also is expected to be postponed as soon as it opens because one of Mr Andreotti's co-defendants, a former senior mafioso turned informant, Gaetano Badalamenti, says he is needed for the next few weeks as a witness at other trials in the United States.

The growing impression among Mafia experts is that both prosecutors and witnesses are waiting until after Italy's general election on 21 April to see whether the political climate, always a crucial factor in

a country where organised crime and the state have formed informal alliances in the past, will permit them to act as freely as they would wish.

A victory for the centre-right, whose leader, Silvio Berlusconi, has declared war on large swathes of the Italian judiciary in retaliation for corruption charges brought against him in Milan, is likely to weaken the judiciary.

This, in turn, may unmnerve Mafia informants who need to be sure their testimony will stick. Otherwise they risk losing their lives and those of their families in revenge killings.

A victory for the centre-left, on the other hand, could strengthen the hand of the prosecutors and breathe new life into both trials against Mr Andreotti. But only if it is accompanied by a vigorous anti-Mafia policy in Sicily and the rest of southern Italy.

Tension over the issue has been illustrated this week by a political row over another Mafia trial, in which a former police chief of Palermo, later



Andreotti: May be over 80 by time verdict is reached

promoted to a senior position in the secret services, was sentenced to 10 years in jail for collusion with Cosa Nostra last weekend.

Berlusconi supporters, showing scant respect for the independence of the judiciary, denounced the sentence as a witch-hunt. The head of the parliamentary anti-Mafia commission, a Berlusconi acolyte, Tiziano Parenti, said: "These are judgements against history, typical of Nazi regimes." The Palermo prosecutor's office described this accusation as "gravely offensive".

US agency to sue Mitsubishi over sex harassment

JOHN CARLIN
Washington

Mitsubishi, the Japanese car giant, faces what could prove to be the most expensive sexual harassment suit in US history following a decision by a government agency to file charges on behalf of hundreds of women employed at a manufacturing plant in Normal, Illinois.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) said that as many as 700 women had been subjected to systematic sexual abuse over a six-year period. If the commission succeeds in proving the case each of the women could receive up to \$300,000 (£200,000) in damages.

The lawsuit says that women at the plant were subjected to a "hostile and abusive work environment"; male employees had groped and fondled the breasts, buttocks and genitalia of female assembly line workers, and the women had to endure obscene remarks and lewd graffiti on the factory walls. Officials said, without providing details, that in one instance an air hose had been "used" on the genitals of a female worker.

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The Chicago Sun-Times reported yesterday that women at the plant held contradictory positions on the allegations. One told the newspaper that it had become routine for women to be "touched" and "called certain names". Another, however, said that supervisors had dealt effectively with complaints of sexual harassment.

Mitsubishi denied the charges, however. "If we are surprised and horrified at anything," said Gary Shultz, vice-president of Mitsubishi's Normal subsidiary, "it's the manner that this has been brought to the public's attention."

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Some of the hundreds of women who had been victimised had resigned to avoid further humiliation, according to the EEOC.

"This case should send the

strong message that sexual harassment in the workplace, whether in office suites or on the assembly line floor, will not be tolerated – especially on the outrageous scale that we see here," said Paul Igasaki, vice-chairman of the EEOC.

Another commission official observed that the pattern of abuse at the Mitsubishi plant in Normal could not have flourished "without the knowledge and consent, either explicit or implicit, of the management".

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Last year Del Laboratories of New York paid out a record \$1.85m to settle a sexual harassment suit brought against the company's chief executive.

EEOC officials said that if they won the case against Mitsubishi, the car giant would probably end up paying substantially

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Grave reunites lovers killed by Bosnia's tribal passions

EMMA DALY
Sarajevo

The young lovers whose front-line murder came to symbolise the madness of the war waged in Bosnia for ethnic purity, were buried together in Sarajevo yesterday, fulfilling the hopes of their parents, three years on.

Admira Isamic was a Muslim and Bosko Brkic was a Serb. His father was dead and his family was in Serbia but he stayed in Sarajevo with Admira for the first year of the war, until she agreed that the future lay in a new life abroad.

In May 1993, they set off to cross the treacherous front line, believing that they had paid enough money to guarantee their safety from soldiers on both sides of the line. But as they crossed the desolate stretch of tarmac in no man's land, surrounded by gutted buildings full of snipers, the two lovers, together since the age of 17, were met with a hail of gunfire. Bosko fell first and Admira crawled towards him for her last embrace.



Doomed lovers: Admira and Bosko whose romance defied their race loyalties; the couple lying dead in sniper alley; Admira's mother, Nera, at their new grave yesterday

For eight days the warring armies argued over who was to blame. Meanwhile, the lovers' bodies lay entwined on the sunlit street, as weeds pushed through the tarmac. One morning they were gone. Bosnian Serb soldiers said they had rescued the bodies; but Muslim prisoners of war later said that the Serbs had sent them out instead to fetch the corpses.

"If to live means to hope, then there is a little hope for me to bury them together, as they lived together," Admira's father, Zijah, said at the time. The first joint funeral, at a Serbian cemetery in Lukavica, just outside Sarajevo, was attended by Bosko's mother, Rada. Yesterday, friends and relatives gathered in the Lion cemetery on a spring day to pay their final farewells.

"If I could have, I would have organised music and trumpets, because I am so joyful to have returned them here," Zijah Isamic said.

He stepped up to the open grave and hurled in the first handful of earth. Friends and family followed suit. The crowd stood silently as the four gravediggers covered the wooden coffins, which lay side by side.

Mourners stepped forward to lay wreaths of bright daffodils and red carnations, while Mr Isamic led his family up the path away from the valley, where a football pitch is obscured by war graves and where Nato soldiers camp in what is left of the Zeta Olympic skating stadium.

Admira's mother, Nera, paused to embrace the wooden grave markers, as her tears flowed.



The gravediggers sat nearby. And they also wept. They had performed the same task for hundreds of families throughout the war, in daylight under mortar fire, or at night, to hinder the snipers, but this was a harder task.

"A funeral is a funeral but this was a little more difficult," Ivan Maric said. "It's very sad because they were so young."

But at 25, the two were older than many of the other war victims buried in the Lion cemetery. Youth alone cannot explain their place in the mythology of the conflict.

To the people of Sarajevo and to the outside world, the journalists and film-makers who wanted to retell the story, the love of Admira and Bosko was a symbol of the normality of life in Sarajevo before the

war, when inter-ethnic unions were common. And their deaths personified the madness and the evil of those who would put such ties asunder. But what of their reburial?

"These should be the last war victims to be buried here – it must never happen again," Mr Maric said. It was a very Sarajevo affair – a Muslim and a Serb buried by a Croat. Mr Maric.

Bosko's family, however, was absent, because Admira's family was not able to contact Bosko's relatives across the former front line. His mother had earlier agreed through friends to the couple's exhumation and their reburial in Sarajevo. Her only stipulation was that they should occupy the same grave.

"Their death was a message," Mr Isamic said. "They were born the same year, they were living together, they died together. I just continued what they left behind. I respected their message."

It is far from clear that post-war Bosnia will be able to do the same.

Iran beats Turkey to draw on expulsions

BRIAN POPE
Istanbul

A brazen Iran toughed it out against Turkey yesterday, turning a row over Tehran's links to a murderous Islamist gang in Istanbul into a diplomatic tit-for-tat and a debate over Turkey's links with Israel.

Turkey launched a pre-emptive strike when a senior Turkish official visiting Tehran, Ali Tuyyan, quietly asked Iran on Tuesday to withdraw four Iranian diplomats implicated last month by a Islamist hitman.

Reacting with speed, Iranian officials arrested several Turks and accused four Turkish political attaches of spying, illegal and immoral activities and conspiring against the Islamic republic.

A visibly angry spokesman for the Turkish foreign ministry yesterday denied the accusations and said Turkey had recalled the four diplomats "for their security". If Iran did not recall its own four they would be expelled, he said.

Mr Tuyyan had presented a dossier of Iranian links to a series of terrorist killings and kidnaps in Turkey to Iranian officials, but foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati chose to ignore it in a statement.

Instead, Mr Velayati tried to turn the debate into one about Turkey's Middle East policy after it signed a military co-operation agreement with Israel in February.

"Iran is concerned over providing any facility to the Zionist regime on the grounds that such concessions are against the vital interests of the Islamic world and the region," he said.

Pulitzer Prize for captured reporter

MICHAEL ELLIS
Reuters

Boston — David Rohde, a reporter on the *Christian Science Monitor*, who was captured and held by Bosnian Serbs last autumn after uncovering suspected mass graves, won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting yesterday.

Mr Rohde was the first Western journalist to visit and collect evidence from the graves, where human rights officials believe more than 3,000 Muslims were massacred and buried following the fall of the UN "safe haven" of Srebrenica to Bosnian Serbs in July 1995.

While taking pictures of human bones at one suspected grave site, he was arrested by Serb guards and charged with falsifying documents, facing a jail term for "criminal espionage charges".

After his capture became a central issue in the Balkan peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, Bosnian Serb authorities confirmed they were holding Mr Rohde. The US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, in-

tervened and Rohde was released after 10 days.

On his return to Boston, where the *Monitor* is published, Rohde wrote that two mass graves he visited were exactly as described by witnesses who said they survived executions outside Srebrenica. "The layout was exactly like they said it was, and I found the graves. Everything matches," Rohde told Reuters in November.

"It was just like a regular field but one big, wide area had been dug up and filled back in again. On top of that, scattered across that were shoes, shirts and eyeglasses. And there was a separate pile of a hundred jackets – no bullets in the jackets, no indications of any fights in the area," he said.

Rohde, 28, was on assignment in Srebrenica yesterday, researching a book about the massacre, and could not be reached for comment. In a press release, he said he was "happy to get the truth out about the Srebrenica massacre". Last week, he went back to the graves and filed a story which said the sites had been tampered with.

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international

High stakes in Korean grudge match

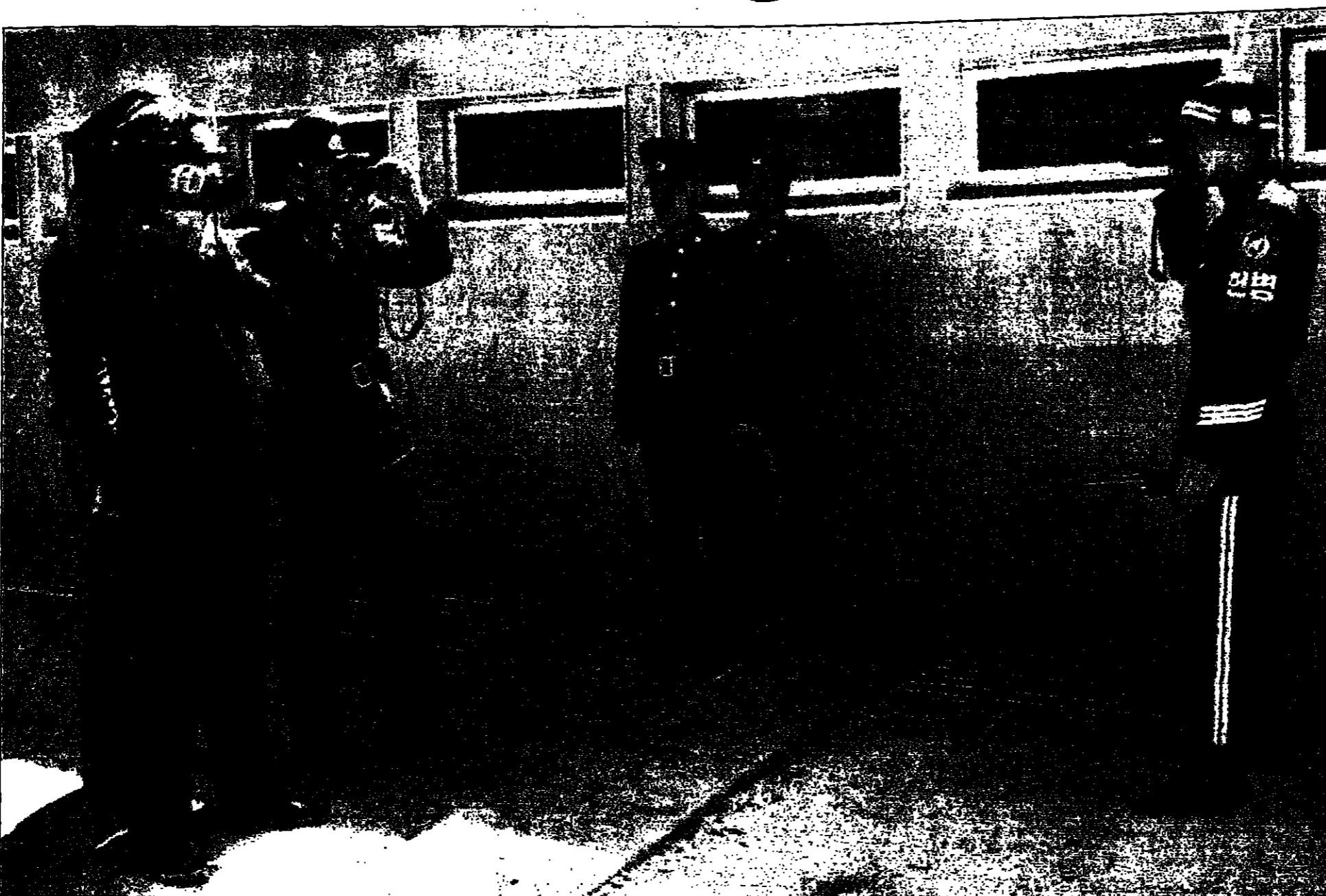
RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Seoul

"Congratulations!" said the student in the tracksuit, when I told him that I was reporting on South Korean politics. "This hasn't happened for years - you must be very happy." A few moments earlier, it should be explained, I had been doubled up on a Seoul pavement, coughing up phlegm into a wad of crumpled tissues. My throat was burning, my nose was running, and my tear-gas-filled eyes felt as if they were liquefying on to my cheeks. "There hasn't been a riot like this since the 1980s," my new friend assured me, genuinely happy on my behalf. "And you caught it - that's... that's great."

Welcome to Seoul, and the 15th National Assembly elections of the Republic of Korea. A fortnight ago, when the campaign kicked off, it could hardly have been less promising, an uninspiring grudge match between three parties with identical policies and identically named leaders - Mr Kim, Mr Kim, and President Kim. Today, as voters go to the polls to elect their 299 National Assemblymen, this is still going to be an election in which the conventional staples of democratic politics - ideological difference, policy debate - play little part. But what it lacks in substance it has made up for with the greatest quality of Korean politics - a sense of occasion.

Credit for this belongs to two groups which, in the last few days, have made a dramatic re-emergence into the political mainstream. The first is the students who, until a few years ago, were a significant political force in their own right. In 1987, a sequence of huge rallies, frequently ending in violent battles with riot police, played a large part in persuading the then president, Chun Doo-Hwan, to give in to popular pressure for democratic elections.

But since 1993, when the former dissident Kim Young-Sam became president, many of their grievances have been addressed. Chun Doo-Hwan is in prison, along with his successor, Roh Tae Woo, charged with bribery and with ordering a massacre of student protesters in 1980. A fortnight ago, however, on a demonstration against an increase in university tuition fees, a 20-year-old undergraduate died of a heart attack after a beating from the



Bordering on the ridiculous: North Korean troops (left) and a South Korean soldier film one other in Panmunjom yesterday

Photograph: Ahn Young-Joon

police. His funeral procession yesterday attracted 7,000 marchers who snaked through the city all day, blocking traffic, chanting anti-government slogans and exchanging tear gas and eggs with the riot police.

How much impact this will have on the elections is hard to gauge, although for President Kim, the sight of thousands of youths chanting for his downfall cannot have been reassuring. What he loses to the students, however, he may gain from the intervention of another perennial force in South Korean politics: North Korea. Last

weekend, after renouncing its responsibilities in the armistice which ended the Korean War in 1953, the People's Army made three miniature sorties into its side of the supposedly demilitarised zone which separates the enemy states. Similar hit-junks have gone on intermittently for years, provoking no more than average alarm. But this week, the president and his ministers have talked of little else - mindful, no doubt, of cautious older voters whose memories of the Korean War may induce them to opt for caution rather than change.

President Kim's New Korea Party will need all the help it can muster. By most reckonings, it stands to lose its present majority, to retain between 100 and 130 of the 299 seats. The principal beneficiary will be the second of the three Kims - Kim Dae-Jung, another former dissident and the president's one-time ally, whose National Congress for New Politics (NCPN) is running roughly neck and neck with the NKP. If the NKP can edge ahead, then it stands a chance of cobbling together a majority with the help of a handful of

independents - although this would be a humiliating blow to the intensely proud president.

If not, they will be forced into an alliance with Kim Number Three - the leader of the United Liberal Democrats (ULD), Kim Jong-Pil. At this point the contest would start to get interesting, and the true significance of the election would be revealed - a contest marginally important in itself, except as a prologue to the great struggle, the battle for the presidency.

Apart from holding up budgets and legislation, the power of the National Assembly pales

in comparison with that of the president. Kim Young-Sam's single five-year term will come to an end in 1998. Elections will be held in December next year and both his rival Kims are in the running.

Although Kim Young-Sam cannot stand for re-election he is desperate to pass on his office to a political sympathiser, and for more than the usual reasons. As the first modern president without a military background, he cherishes an image of himself as the father of his country's democracy. His place in history could easily be

threatened if one of his former adversaries among the Kims was to take his place. If the ULD is required to come on board to bail out the NKP, however, Kim Jong-Pil has made it clear that he will do so only in return for an endorsement in the presidential elections jumping the queue of younger NKP loyalists which Kim Young-Sam has lined up. In that case, the President will be left with a choice - either muddle along in the National Assembly without a majority, or yield his place in history to an old rival.

Letters, page 18

Hopes for deal over US bases in Japan

Tokyo (AP) — America and Japan are close to agreement on measures to ease the row over US forces in Okinawa, the American Ambassador Walter Mondale said yesterday.

But he added that he was not sure Okinawans will be satisfied with measures to cut back military landholdings and otherwise reduce friction over troops on the southern island.

Mr Mondale said recent tensions involving Taiwan and North Korea reinforced the importance of the US-Japan security relationship, to be reaffirmed during President Clinton's visit to Japan next week.

The rape of a 12-year-old girl by three American servicemen last August ignited protests against US bases on Okinawa, which hosts more than half the 47,000 US troops in Japan.

Amid the outcry, a joint US-Japan committee was set up in November to look into ways to consolidate bases on Okinawa.

Both US embassy and Japanese foreign ministry officials refused to comment on a report in the *Yomiuri* newspaper saying the pact would call for America to return 12,350 acres to landowners on Okinawa.

The report said the plan does not call for the return of Futenma Air Base, which has topped the Okinawans' priority list because it is in the middle of a city.

US officials also have agreed to a ban on uniformed marches off base and stricter restrictions on night flights. Mr Mondale was uncertain whether he expected the moves to satisfy the Okinawans, but he said the US had "really tried" to address their concerns.

"There's been more effort in the last six months than in the last 20 years," he said, adding that a reassessment of the US military role was long overdue.

Both governments have said US troop levels in Japan would remain constant, though some troops may be moved to other parts of the country. Okinawa's government has drawn up plans for the complete withdrawal of troops from the island by 2015.

Meanwhile, more than 3,000 people living near an air base outside Tokyo yesterday filed a law suit demanding 3.5bn yen (£20m) compensation from both governments for noise.

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international

Nuclear dangers: A summit in Moscow on safety issues in the East could be used to focus attention on weapons in the West

Yeltsin delivers first salvo in missile debate

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Just over a week before he plays host to the Group of Seven industrial nations at a major summit on nuclear safety, Boris Yeltsin yesterday sought to steal some early limelight by urging Western countries to keep their nuclear missiles on their own territories.

He combined his appeal with a reassurance that Moscow would this year finish withdrawing the former Soviet nu-

clear arsenal to within Russia's borders, with the return of the last weapons from Ukraine and Belarus.

His proposal - which would require an overhaul of Nato nuclear thinking were it to go ahead - was greeted coolly by Western diplomats, although it is likely to be on the agenda at the summit on 19-20 April.

The United States is the only country, apart from Russia, with nuclear weapons on foreign soil - principally aircraft-delivered bombs, which are stored in Ger-

many and other European countries. Most analysts thought it unlikely the US would accept the idea, largely because it would mean diminishing America's role in providing the Nato nuclear umbrella. A spokeswoman for the US State Department said that it was unable to react to Russia's suggestion until it received more details.

Mr Yeltsin's suggestion appears to be part of his effort to play on the large anti-Nato sentiment in Russia as the battle to win votes in the presi-

dential election in June gathers momentum. Russia's anxiety about Nato expansion has deepened - as Yuri Ushakov, a senior official with the Russian Foreign Ministry, made clear yesterday when he addressed a security conference in Moscow.

"We at the Foreign Ministry understand that the east Europeans feel drawn to Western civilisation, but we cannot understand where Nato comes into it. It seems to us that such structures as the European Union, the Council of Europe ...

are contributing to the status of a member of the European family to a greater degree than the military alliance, Nato."

If Nato expands eastwards, Russia's military would "reasonably seek and achieve a dramatic increase in defence spending and a revision of the basic arms control agreements", he warned. "The danger is there."

Nor, he said, could Russia comprehend the east Europeans' view that entry into Nato would remove some "grey areas of in-

stability" - areas of insecurity that Moscow believes no longer exist. The reverse would be true, as they would find themselves "on the frontier of confrontation", he argued.

Exactly what this "frontier" would comprise is unclear. Some analysts have suggested that Russia's response to Nato's eastward expansion would be to delay withdrawing ex-Soviet missiles from neighbouring Belarus, or even deploying more weapons there. However - despite the new integration pact

between the two nations - the Russian military is believed to be opposed to this idea, not least because of their concern that the weapons could be used to threaten Russia in the future.

Russia's sensitivity about Nato appears to flow from an assumption in Moscow that nuclear missiles would be deployed on the territory of any new Nato member, although there is scant evidence that this would be the case. Poland, for example, is unlikely to welcome that prospect, partly be-

cause it would immediately find itself the target of Russian weapons.

But Mr Yeltsin's comments will add to a debate in Nato about how to handle eastern expansion. While the alliance has accepted that it is unlikely to store nuclear weapons in peacetime on the territory of new members, a further commitment to remove them from countries where they are already stored would revive a damaging debate about the role of nuclear weapons in Europe.



Parting shot: Boris Yeltsin (centre) and President Kwasniewski (right) pass a guard of honour at the end of the Polish leader's visit to Russia

Polish PM calms Russia over Nato

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland completed a difficult three-day visit to Moscow yesterday, acknowledging he had failed to allay Russian suspicions about Poland's desire to join Nato.

"Only a blind person could expect Russia and Poland to agree on the question of Nato. The important thing that we were able to talk about it," Mr Kwasniewski said.

Russia has long opposed the admission into the western alliance of its former Warsaw Pact satellites, proposing instead a joint western-Russian security guarantee of central and

eastern Europe. Recently, however, the Kremlin has indicated that it may not object to the inclusion of Poland and a couple of other countries in Nato, provided they are not fully integrated into its military structures and security arrangements.

Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have rejected both proposals, insisting they are sovereign states with the right to choose which alliances they want to join and on what terms. At the same time, Mr Kwasniewski and Czech and Hungarian leaders have emphasised they do not view Nato membership as a mechanism for isolating Russia.

"Poland does not want to be

on visa-free travel and the repatriation of people who illegally cross the Polish-Russian border failed to materialise. There was some discussion of economic issues, including a proposal to create a free-trade zone in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, bordering Poland, but no formal accords.

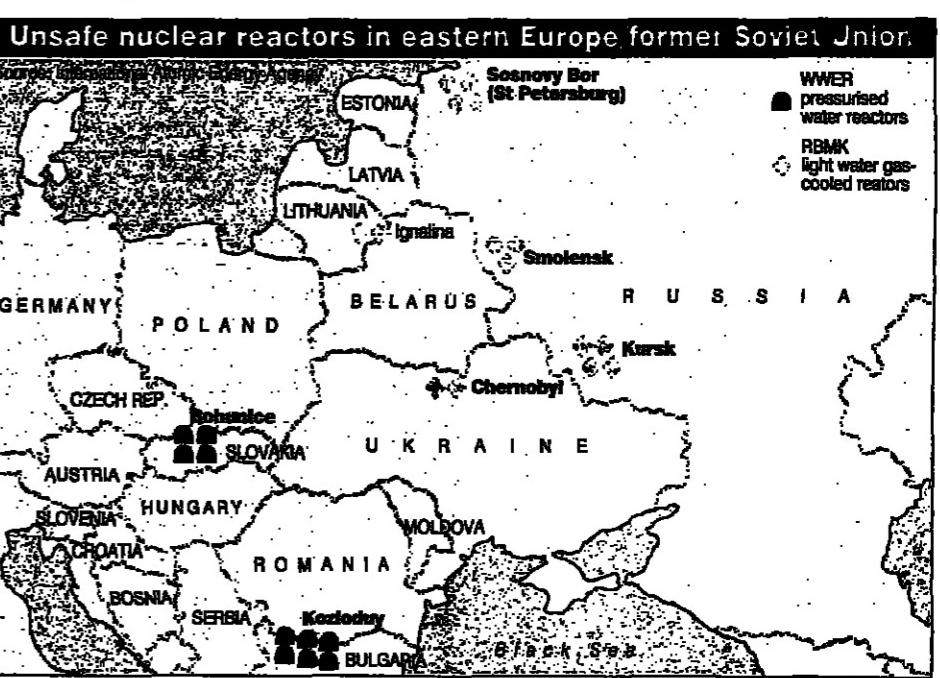
The lack of more substantial results undermined the recent strains in Polish-Russian relations. These were highlighted last January by the resignation of Poland's former prime minister, Józef Oleksy, over allegations that he had been a Soviet and Russian agent.

On Tuesday, Mr Yeltsin blamed Mr Wałęsa for the poor atmosphere, saying: "Recently

Other proposed agreements

we hadn't got on well with Wałęsa." The former Polish president retorted that his visit had cooled because "Russia was testing its hegemonic tendencies, while I was resolutely defending Poland's interests".

Mr Kwasniewski, a former Communist turned left-of-centre democrat, made a point during his visit of holding talks with Gennady Zyuganov, the Russian Communist leader who says he would like to restore the Soviet Union. Mr Kwasniewski wanted a close-up look at the man who is favourite to defeat Mr Yeltsin in next June's presidential elections and whose policies could greatly affect Poland's destiny.



Africa nuclear pact puts Israel under pressure

JONATHAN WRIGHT
Reuters

Cairo - Africa today joins Latin America and the South Pacific in an expanding band of zones free of nuclear weapons when 53 African states and the five big nuclear powers sign the Treaty of Pelindaba in Cairo.

The choice of venue, in the only African country which borders Israel, is another turn of the screw in an Arab campaign to persuade the Jewish state to open up its nuclear programme to international inspection and eventually dismantle it.

The naming of the treaty, after the site where South Africa developed and then dismantled its own nuclear weapons, also sends Israel a message that unilateral nuclear disarmament and regional peace can go hand in hand.

The treaty, which bans nuclear weapons from the African continent and the islands around it, specifically advocates a similar agreement covering the Middle East states.

The parties [recognise] that the establishment of other NWFZs [nuclear-weapon-free zones], especially in the Middle East, would enhance the security of states party to the African NWFZ," says the treaty.

For the host country Egypt it is also a step towards banning all weapons of mass destruction - nuclear, chemical or biological - from the countries in its neighbourhood.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will invoke that target in his keynote address to the signing ceremony, officials said.

"The treaty is doubtless a his-

toric step, which must be followed by the next logical step - clearing the Middle East of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction," the Egyptian government newspaper *Al-Gomhouria* said yesterday.

The five declared nuclear states - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - will sign protocols to cooperate with the treaty and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any part of Africa.

France and Spain will sign a separate protocol covering the Canary Islands and two towns on the coast of Morocco in the case of Spain, and the Indian Ocean islands of Mayotte and Réunion in the case of France.

But in a concession to the big powers, the treaty leaves each state to set its own policy on visits by foreign ships or overflights by foreign aircraft which may carry nuclear arms.

In another let-out clause, the treaty gives each state the right to withdraw from the treaty if it decides that extraordinary events ... have jeopardised its supreme interests".

But signatories must disclose any capability they have to make nuclear weapons, then destroy these arms and the facilities for making them under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

They also promise to reach safeguard agreements with the IAEA, equivalent to those under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which all African states already support. Israel, which refused to sign the non-proliferation treaty, is believed to possess 200 nuclear warheads.

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After today, the Government's majority in the House of Commons will be one. Already Julian Critchley, the out-of-sorts Tory MP for Aldershot, has claimed: "I'm it." But of course Sir Richard Body, the most publicly reluctant member of the parliamentary Conservative party, is also "it". As are, individually, each of the Eurosceptic rebels who will organise as a "Group of Eight" on the Tory benches. As is any potential Tory defector.

Mr Critchley is more significant than Sir Richard and the Eight, because he is on the One Nation – one might almost say New Labour – wing of the Tory party. There are many other Conservatives who it can be imagined would be more comfortable with Tony Blair as prime minister than Michael Portillo. And after today, a Tory defector can have the added glory of a paragraph in history to the effect that they wiped out John Major's majority. For Mr Major's majority will be wafer thin following his party's expected defeat in today's Staffordshire South East by-election.

Of course, James Callaghan defied parliamentary arithmetic and electoral gravity for three years after he lost his majority. (Who now remembers the role played in this by the defectors of 1976: John Stonehouse to the "English National Party" before his expulsion from the Commons; John Silsby and John Robertson to the Scottish Labour Party?)

But most of the time, Mr Callaghan had the support of the Liberals in a formal pact. This did not stop his government suffering embarrassing defeats – even being forced to cut income tax in 1978 – but ensured he could not be brought down. He survived fewer than six months after the Lib-Lab pact ended in the autumn of 1978.

As Mr Major takes his penultimate step to minority government, the record of the past and the predictions of the future do not suggest that he can remain in power until his preferred date for the next election, 1 May 1997, still just over 12 months away. Even if there are no defectors longing for historical paragraph status, the actuaries tell us that one Tory MP can be expected to die every three months. This means the majority would disappear by July and be

turned into a minority by October. It would take two deaths because by-elections are nowadays postponed for as long as possible; it is the iron law of this parliament that the Government cannot win by-elections.

Almost the only thing that matters in Staffordshire South-East today is the size of the swing to Labour. It is likely to be less than the postwar record 23-point swing posted by Ian Pearson in Dudley West – in many ways a similar Birmingham overspill constituency – in December 1994. If the swing is greater, then the Conservatives are in very serious trouble indeed. It would suggest that the scare over BSE in beef had destroyed the Government's patient efforts to rebuild its trust on the back of one of the more virtuous recoveries in recent economic history.

But the real question is likely to be how far the movement to Labour falls short of the Blair honeymoon benchmark. If Labour wins the seat with a majority of only a few thousand votes, it could suggest that the traditional link between the performance of the economy and the popularity of the government was finally being restored.

A fuller test of public opinion will be offered in the local elections on 2 May – which give about half the population (and not including London, Scotland and Wales) the chance to deliver the Tories' annual drubbing. The issue for the past three years has been not whether the Tories will lose hundreds of seats, but did they do better or worse than last year?

Whatever the outcome today and in three weeks' time, it is unlikely to persuade the Government to bring forward its plans for the next election. As in 1991, Mr Major is convinced that the longer he plays the election, the better his chances are. The fact that he faces a fundamentally more difficult task than five years ago does not deter him from trying to make the best of his hand.

His government is not yet under immediate threat. Mr Critchley may not like the idea of the Tories promising a referendum on the single Euro-

Today: By-election for the vacant parliamentary seat of Staffordshire South-East. The seat became vacant with the death of the Conservative MP Sir David Lightbown on 12 December.

Next week: Probably a House of Commons debate on Railtrack self-off, which could spark a backbench rebellion.

May 2: Local elections in England. More than 10 million electors can vote in the contests, seen as an important indicator of the public mood with little more than a year at most left of Parliament's term.

May 30: Elections to the Forum in Northern Ireland. Debate on the Elections Bill will be fierce and may cause backbench revolt.

June 22-23: European Union summit of heads of government in Florence, Italy, might provoke more rebellion from backbenchers.

September 22-28: Liberal Democrat party conference, Brighton.

September 25-28: Scottish National Party annual conference, Inverness.

September 30-October 4: Labour Party conference, Blackpool.

Unionist Party were also soured by angry exchanges over the vote on the Scott report. All nine UUP MPs turned up to vote against the Government and it was only Tony Rupe Allison's last-minute switch that carried the day by one vote. But the UUP resented accusations that they offered a deal in return for

The question that dominates Westminster is: When Major loses his majority, what then? As in the 1970s, Northern Ireland suddenly moves to the heart of the politics of the UK. Mr Blair has pursued a policy of bipartisanship from the moment of the IRA ceasefire in August 1994, and has continued it since the ending of the ceasefire earlier this year. He has said he would not try to bring the Government down over Northern Ireland, and this has not changed after the tempered criticisms of the Government made by Mo Mowlam, Labour's Northern Ireland spokeswoman, on Tuesday.

If there is trouble for the Government over Northern Ireland, Labour will not be making it. But the Ulster Unionists might. It was Jonathan Caines, recently special adviser to Northern Ireland Secretary Patrick Mayhew, who suggested in a leaked document that the Unionists might see no reason to sustain the Government this autumn. Their voters are just as disillusioned with this government's record on the economy and public services as voters in the rest of the country. And if they are satisfied that Mr Blair is at least no more hostile to their interests than Mr Major, why wait?

Relations between the Government and David Trimble's Ulster

October 8-11: Conservative Party conference, Bournemouth, a possible launch pad for a general election campaign.

October 10: Possible general election date – party conferences would have to be scrapped. The economy may have picked up with strong consumer spending.

Early November: Queen's Speech.

November 10-12: CBI conference, Harrogate.

November 14: Possible general election date – campaign would be launched at the party conference.

November 26: Budget Day (provisional).

Graphic: Mark Hayman. Research: Anna Davies

On the grid, ready to go

Candidates

Conservative: Only 293 of 641 non-Northern Ireland seats have candidates.

Labour: All but 16 candidates have been chosen.

Liberal Democrat: Just over 300 candidates are in place.

Ad Agencies

Conservative: The key agency is M&S Saatchi, led by Maurice Saatchi, veteran of the past four Tory campaigns.

Labour: BMP-DDB Needham, led by Chris Powell, brother of Tony Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell.

Liberal Democrat: Knight Leach Delaney, the Delaney being Paul, whose brother Barry once made party political broadcasts for Labour.

Campaign Teams
Conservative: Chairman, Dr Brian Mawhinney, and Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, are the main sets. Former Express journalist Charles Lewington presents.

Labour: Centrally, Peter Mandelson, Tony Blair's closest adviser, who ran Labour's 1987 campaign. But formally, Gordon Brown, John Prescott and Robin Cook lead the campaign, presented by Alastair Campbell, Liberal Democrat: Campaign chairman, Lord Richard Holme, gave up fighting Cheltenham just before the Lib Dems won it. Preparing the campaign is Alan Leman, who says this time there will be "more of a team feel".

DIARY

Work at Harrods, if you're French

I am a little surprised as I peruse the French newspaper *Le Figaro* to see a large advertisement placed by Harrods, advertising for management staff in various departments such as marketing, human resources, and other key strategic posts at the Knightsbridge store. Applicants, whose relocation costs will be paid by the store, must already have proved themselves by having worked in "un environnement dynamique."

Do the ranks of the British unemployed and the British "keen to change jobs" not include sufficient management whiz-kids with the requisite "dynamisme, réactivité et motivation" as the advert puts it? It also says that "note président" (of Harrods, not France) Mr Al Fayed (above) and his international co-workers are far-sighted: "but the future is not only a vision; it is a reality."

But why does Mr Al Fayed, a vociferous patriot, seek staff in France for the most quintessentially British of stores? The Harrods public affairs director, Michael Cole, tells me: "We believe it is in the interests of this country to employ the best possible people, from all over the world. We employ in our workforce people from 54 sovereign states. The man who runs the food hall is a German. Mr Al Fayed has created a British institution of which we can all be proud." *Mais oui.*

Cellulite? Moi?

The Princess of Wales has in her time been accused of being paranoid, of attempting to scupper her husband's chances of acceding to the throne and of having an affair with a well-known British sportsman. To all these accusations she has maintained a dignified

silence. This week she was "accused" of having a cellulite problem. No royal reticence on this one. The next morning her indignant rebuttal of the claim was published on the front page of the *Daily Mirror*. A princess's priorities ...

Luvvies in Lilliput

The excellent adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels* on Channel 4 over Easter was a celebration of family values, I see. The director, Charles Sturridge, cast his wife, Phoebe Nicholls, as the Empress of Lilliput (they met when he directed *Brideshead Revisited*, in which she played Cordelia). Their eldest child, Thomas, played Gulliver's son Tom, and their toddlers Matilda and Arthur appeared as infant Lilliputians.

It was an exploitative decision by me

to use Thomas," Mr Sturridge tells *Harpers & Queen* with a delightfully huffy overstatement, "I knew I had a very difficult thing to achieve with that part, and I knew he could do it." As well as family Sturridge dominating the cast list, there should also have been a credit for Mr Sturridge's tutor at Oxford, Peter Bailey. When he was 18, Sturridge wrote an essay on "The Satire of Gulliver's Travels". Mr Bailey wrote on it: "A competent survey. May be of use to you later."

Save us from Rolf

I demand an organisation dedicated to saving classic rock music from cover versions. Playwrights and their estates can refuse to lease the rights to applicants they don't fancy. Film studios have rights over their productions. But no

such safeguards exist when it comes to covering pop songs. And so, watch out later this month for Rolf Harris's very own version of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody", with wobble board replacing Freddie Mercury's operatic cries of "scaramouche". Any more plans Rolf? "Strawberry Fields Forever" complete with didgeridoo perhaps?

Amphibious amour

Remember Simon Smith and his amazing dancing bear? This is Ken Livingstone's amazing dancing toad. The Brent East MP is one of a number of personalities who have created paintings or drawings to be auctioned for the wildlife charity Care For The Wild. The Liberal leader, Paddy Ashdown, has drawn a bison, to enhance his hardy outdoor image, presumably. But does Mr Livingstone's painting "Dancing Toad - Young at Heart" mean he has transferred his affections from the collection of newts he keeps in his London garden pond? "No," he tells me, "but newts are not as colourful as toads, and toads have more expressive faces." I sense there's a sonnet as well as a painting lurking in the Livingstone breast.

Winning ways

Great seduction techniques of our time: Michael Winner, film director, restaurant critic and charmer, tells the new edition of *Take A Break* magazine: "I tend to say 'Come on, let's get a move on!' And they say, 'I don't know you well enough.' And I say: 'Well, I'm at my best now, but in a couple of weeks you'll hate me because I'll be going downhill.'" It's a wonder any girl can resist.

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Questions the lottery must face

Listen to Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, and you would think that everything in the lush garden which has grown up around the National Lottery is wonderful. It's not. She fudged the serious allegations made last year by the entrepreneur Richard Branson against the parent company of the lottery operator, Camelot. But the questions about what has become so familiar a part of daily life for so many will not go away. The way scratchcards are working poses fundamental questions about the lottery: she is obliged to the millions who pour money into the competition to answer them.

The principle of a lottery, most of the proceeds of which flow into "good causes", is a good one. Without it, the feel-good factor deficit would be even bigger. The enthusiasm with which people young and old, high and mighty, join in the weekly draw is spontaneous and genuine.

But doubts surround the way the lottery is practised. This is public money, literally if not officially. The way it is collected and distributed demands scrutiny. Yet the official scrutineer, Ofot, under the leadership of the ineffective Peter Davis, is not trusted as a regulator should be. The minister responsible – the ever-smiling Mrs Bottomley – must accept that, after 18 months, there are aspects of the operation of the National Lottery she does not know enough about, such as the sale of scratchcards to young people. It is time she set up a review, for even if she does not think she needs information and assessment, we, the punters, do.

The agenda for such a review begins with scratchcards. By law, Ofot must not licence any game that encourages "excessive gambling". That is imprecise, but anecdote suggests Instant do encourage patterns of play and spending which warp the original conception of the National Lottery. Why is anecdote all we have to go on? Because Ofot has not bothered

to find out who bets on scratchcards; it has, till recently, done virtually no monitoring or research. Reports suggest children are avid buyers of the cards. The police are worried. Yet no action has been taken, perhaps because the Home Office, responsible for gambling and charities, does not even seem to be talking to the Department of National Heritage.

After that comes the distribution of lottery funds. After a rocky start, the lottery grants boards are up and running well. But are the respective shares of sports, arts, heritage and charities right? More money should go to help the poorer, for that would mitigate the lottery's regressiveness. That is not to say the geographical distribution of funds highlighted in this week's report from the Directory of Social Change is skewed. Some of its figures for per capita receipt of lottery money are meaningless since they are not weighted for the fact big arts companies are concentrated in London. They do not allow either for the fact the lottery boards can only pay out if applications are made. Some parts of the country and some deserving groups have been backward in coming forward. (The review ought to study the cost of making grant applications and whether procedures can be simplified.)

The other main object for the review should be the lottery's commercial basis. Camelot plc is a monopolist. Ofot's task of assessing its costs and profits is made all the more difficult because it lacks directly comparable data. Is that situation immutable? All the other regulators, even the director-general of Water Services, are making efforts to bring competition to bear, however haltingly, on monopoly suppliers. Camelot plc may have a contract with several years to run, but that must not make it immune from question and challenge. The lottery is successful and strong enough to withstand some more probing.

London needs a mayor

The city state is being reborn across Europe. The city is one beneficiary of the weakening power of the nation state, as power passes upwards to supra-national institutions like the European Union and down to local and regional bodies. Cities are the hubs of the modern global economy, where transport and culture, business and public services come together to create an environment attractive to international investment, whether from companies or tourists.

Any nation that lacks a strategy to develop its cities to the full is at a disadvantage. That is just where Britain is, and no more so than London. It is not difficult to feel a sense of frustration, despair even, visiting a European city such as Barcelona, to witness the way that culture and sport, entertainment and history, regional identity and politics, the private and the public sectors mesh together to create a place that has a sense of purpose.

London is a city that has stalled. There is no sense of London-wide initiative, no sense of spirit and little sense of pride. There is development – Southwark council, for instance, has done a good job helping to promote a cultural area on the south bank of the Thames. There are interesting proposals: the architect Sir Richard Rogers has devised a splendid plan to create a pedestrian area sweeping down from Trafalgar Square to the

Thames. But all too often these are lone voices.

What London lacks is a focus and a voice for what are genuinely its interests. The Labour Party yesterday came up with some sensible, cautious proposals to create a Greater London Authority, a directly elected authority the members of which would take the place of Whitehall politicians and women on the boards and quangos that now largely run London-wide services. Much power would be left in the hands of the boroughs.

As a plan to avoid the excesses of old Labour loony leftism, this is all well and good. But it does not go far enough. In particular, Labour should come out and clearly back the idea of creating a directly elected mayor for London and other cities. This is not a panacea: it would create its own problems. But what London lacks more than anything is a voice and a focus for its sense of identity and purpose. The election of a mayor, who would then be responsible for representing London and fighting for its interests in the wider world, would be an excellent way to provide both voice and focus. The creation of directly elected mayors for all large cities would reinvigorate local democracy and enliven drab urban politics with leaders of potential clout and perhaps some personality. So, as usual, Mr Blair, don't smother your instincts in caution; shock us, be bold.

North Korea bullies Seoul voters

Sir: Given the recent events in the Korean peninsula, one must start to worry about the way Far Eastern Communist countries perceive the course of democratic voting. Can they really believe that their military threats are going to produce a situation which benefits them?

Both China's live ammunition tests and North Korea's grumblings over the settlement of 1953 have been timed to coincide with the legislative or presidential elections of their antagonists. Also, it is obvious that the reason for these threats was to attempt to influence the voting patterns. In Taiwan, Chinese manoeuvres produced a justified resentment, which led to the rejection of the candidate China

wished to see. In South Korea too, it seems likely that the New Korea Party of Kim Young Sam has returned from the electoral abyss thanks to the North's trying to push him further down.

In neither of these places do the Communist authorities wish to see war, and it would be unwise of them to flout Western opinion and money. North Korea not so long ago was appealing for massive food aid to prevent starvation, from Japan, from America, and from her prospective enemy, South Korea.

Let us hope that Communist planners will recognise the failure of any policy to intimidate politically aware free voters.

DONALD STARK
London SW1

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk). Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Devaluation is a fool's paradise

Sir: In an otherwise enjoyable article ("Singled out: the case for going in", 3 April), you fail to provide an adequate rebuttal of the Eurosceptic argument that inside a single currency the British government would "hand over control of monetary policy to Europe" (the Case for Staying Out). In so doing, you perfectly illustrate that the pro-European majority in Britain has been forced onto the defensive over the issue of sovereignty.

It is vital that the debate over EMU is conducted in a way relating to the world as it is, not as some would like to remember it. With an increasingly globalised economy, the abandonment of the assumption that governments can "manage" their economies ought to be accompanied by the discrediting of the idea that national sovereignty over economic policy is genuinely possible.

If those who oppose British participation in EMU have concluded that Britain's future lies in continued devaluation, they should surely rethink their position.

SPENCER LIVERMORE
London N4

Entitlements for railway staff

Sir: I find it surprising that Railtrack's new arrangements for travel by rail while on duty should lead to the conclusion that railway staff will lose their existing entitlements to concessionary travel for leisure and travel-to-work purposes.

The opposite is the case. The Government promised during the passage of the railway privatisation legislation that concessionary staff travel, an entitlement provided through contracts of employment, would be safeguarded. That commitment has been met. Arrangements are in place for those staff employed prior to 1 April 1996, together with defendants and retired staff, to continue to use their entitlements.

In general, however, railway staff will no longer be able to use their concessionary travel documentation for duty travel. In future, employers will need to purchase tickets or some other form of authority for travel on duty.

JOHN WATTS
Minister for Railways
and Roads
Department of Transport
London, SW1

Legacy of care for the old

Sir: Polly Toynbee (8 April) complains that John Major "promises to keep their property instead of spending it on care if they have to go into nursing homes". She believes that personal wealth should be used to pay for care rather than burden taxes, and I am inclined to agree.

Further, this site ill with John Major's other expressed wish – to get rid of inheritance tax. This would make inheritance a lottery. Those who died without needing long-term care would be able to pass on all their wealth, but those who spent a long time in care would leave nothing beyond £10,000.

Would it not be better to have an effective inheritance tax and use it to pay (or part pay) for care of those who need it? A society in which inheritance becomes more and more significant risks increasing the already highly damaging wealth differences in the country.

G W ALDERTON
Helsby
Cheshire

Pre-election tax planning

Sir: Recent research conducted by KPMG (Succession Planning Survey, April 1996) suggests that the majority of business owners, while aware of the benefits of tax planning, have done little to maximise the potential gain from existing opportunities.

That, and not a desire to speculate on what a future Labour government's tax policies might be, is the rationale behind our recent series of pre-election tax planning seminars. Far from wishing to frighten our clients into taking action (leading article, 9 April) KPMG believes its duty lies in advising its clients and others of the tax implications of a number of possible post-election scenarios, not just those of a Labour administration.

To state that "organic vegetables are ugly, smaller, grub-filled and not beautiful" is untrue and a load of old compost.

NIGEL JONES
London W1

Sir: Where on earth does Yvette Cooper do her "organic" shopping? In my experience (with the exception of the odd batch of old, unsold over-priced produce) organic vegetables are generally attractive, radiant, regular and of good colour with superior taste.

To state that "organic vegetables are ugly, smaller, grub-filled and not beautiful" is untrue and a load of old compost.

IAN BARLOW
Head of Tax
KPMG
London EC4

Sir: The accountancy profession has left it much too late to offer advice about avoiding excessive tax burdens ("Wealthy team how to beat Labour tax threat", 9 April). The present government already collects a higher proportion of national income in taxation than was ever the case under the previous Labour administration.

NIGEL WILKINS
London SW7

Gay teachers' school outing

Sir: On Sunday, for the first time in eight years, the National Union of Teachers held a debate on lesbian and gay equality. Despite minor differences on the most appropriate union structures to oversee the project, speakers (including Executive members) were unanimous in their support for an annual gay teachers' conference, local support networks and backing teachers who choose to come out at school.

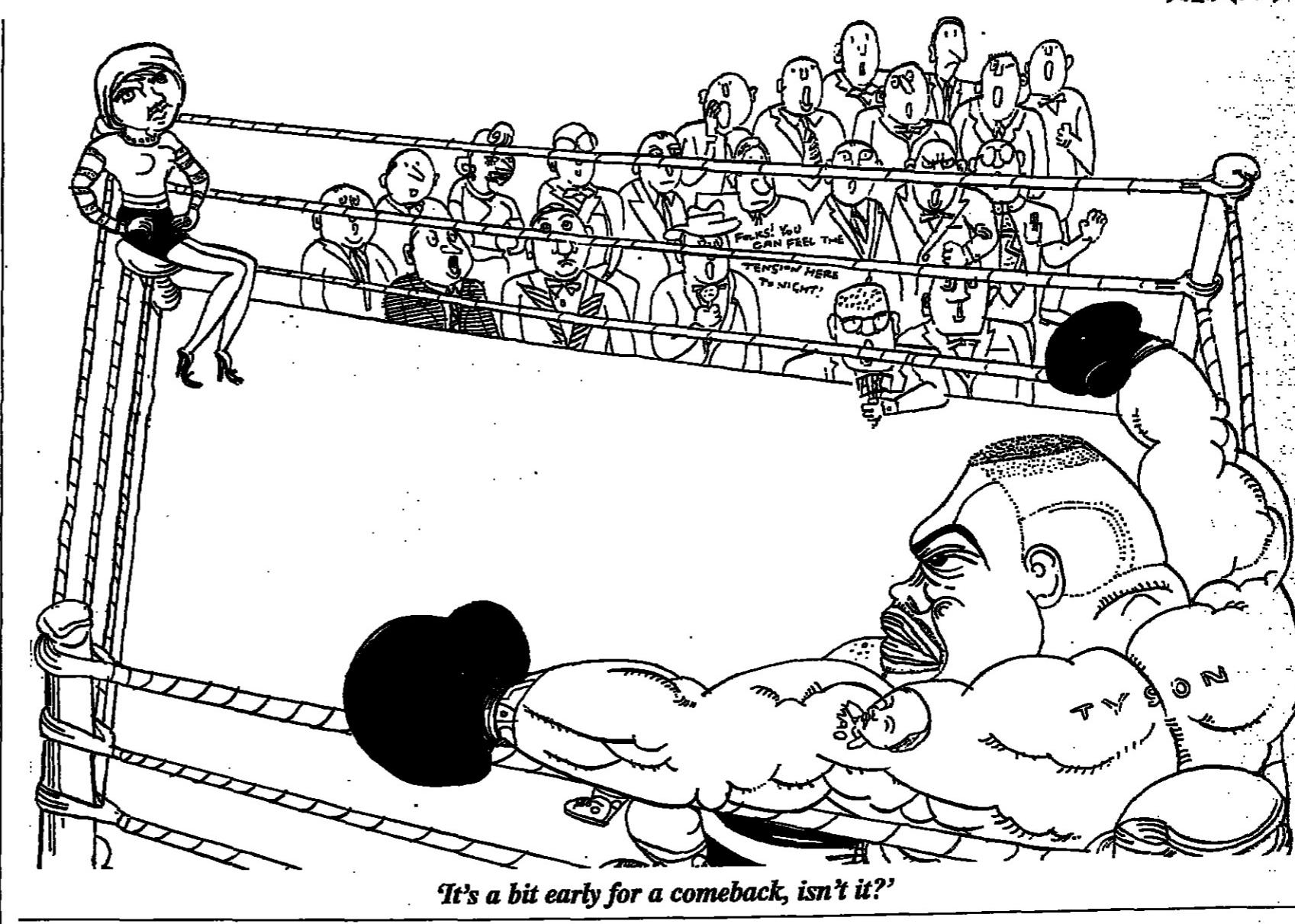
The following morning, the right-wing tabloids were full of predictable, homophobic outrage. I had expected that. What I had not expected was the total silence of supposedly "gay-friendly" papers like your own. If you do share our commitment to building a more tolerant community, why not find space to welcome initiatives such as this one. If only more young children are able to go through school aware that many of the adults they meet there and whom they know and respect are lesbian or gay, we may yet see an end to the prejudice that has blighted the lives of so many people for so many years.

GEOFF ELLINGHAM
Schools' Out
London WC1

Good boys

Sir: The Gallagher boys are innocent because their mother says so ("Mum puts dent in rock band's wild man image", 6 April). Pardon me for being sceptical. More amusing are the calls of various Tory MPs, demanding the musicians are brought to justice. Don't these MPs realise that they should be congratulating the Conservative Party that at least two people in this country have converted from lives of petty crime to successful careers?

DR KEVIN W SOUTHERN
Leeds



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Green farming systems can revive the countryside

Sir: One further point to your valuable debate on whether UK Farming plc can "go green". Rural people and jobs are vital to maintain viable rural communities, services and culture. The reasons for the decline seen in many rural areas are complex but one of the most pressing implications is the loss of rural employment. The UK farm workforce has shrunk from 21 per cent in 1841 to an average of 2.1 per cent in 1995, the second lowest figure in the OECD membership. It is set to drop even further.

The BSE saga has huge implications for rural workers. The intensive farm systems behind BSE have let down not only consumers and the environment but also rural communities. In future they should not be relied upon to provide a stable rural employment base.

It is possible to alter the dynamics such that new and improved farm and rural job scenarios are created. Green farming systems can create job opportunities. Low-input farms such as organic and mixed are, by nature, more labour intensive and are associated with on-farm processing, local marketing and other

activities (one study found 19 per cent greater employment on German organic farms). Landscape and woodland management requires local labour and enhances local incomes. Such systems are often associated with better environmental protection.

Sustainable agriculture will be a reality when a working, healthy environment is created. The obstacles to this are many but the UK could and must take the lead.

VICKI HIRD
Sustainable Agriculture
Food and Environment
London SW1

Sir: Congratulations on your "Comment" page (9 April). All five articles are refreshingly to the point. How wonderful if we could have a government to support organic farming by changing the structure of agricultural subsidies. We would all benefit so much if gradually the evil side-effects of chemicals and pesticides were to be removed. Doubtless in time the national health bill would fall noticeably too.

How shameful that we are almost at the bottom of the list in

Europe for our percentage of organic farming. Before it is too late let us hope we can start moving towards the top.

H J MACKERRAS
London NW8

Sir: Your feature on the potential for "British farming to go green" was excellent (9 April).

The crunch comes when every consumer faces up to the impact that their purchasing decisions have on how the purchase is produced. They can also make sure it causes minimal pollution, both through transport and packaging, to name but two issues.

Some consumers may only consider the extra cost of an organic item versus its "conventional" rival. Others, and I suggest that they are the wise ones, see through the "cheapness" of the latter and appreciate the costs it imposes on all of society in cleaning up water, soil and air, not to mention human health.

Like many others, I prefer the imperfect shape or skin texture of food, knowing that the alternative probably carries a chemical residue, which although minute

pean sovereignty over the European economy. The current situation whereby British interest rates are set by the actions of the Bundesbank would be replaced by a situation where Britain had equal status in the European central bank, giving us the opportunity to participate in the setting of our interest rates.

As for retaining the option of devaluation, you are right to imply that this is a fool's paradise. Devaluation is simply a facade behind which people can shy away from carrying out required economic reforms, as well as providing scant incentive for trade unions to exercise restraint in wage bargaining. It must surely be obvious by now that the most successful economies are those that do not devalue.

If those who oppose British participation in EMU have concluded that Britain's future lies in continued devaluation, they should surely rethink their position.

SPENCER LIVERMORE
London N4

How to do a three-point turn in court



MILES KINGTON

Today I bring you more of the fascinating High Court case in which Mr Sidney Delba stands accused of more than 6,000 parking offences, which is believed to be world record (not counting offences committed by diplomats and embassy chauffeurs).

Counsel: So, Mr Delba, if I may sum up the case so far, you stand accused of leaving your car in a parking space in or near Kensington High Street for a period of over two years?

Defendant: I think that sums it up fairly well.

Counsel: In a space marked "DISABLED ONLY"?

Defendant: That is so.

Counsel: With a ghastly green plastic baby chair on the back seat?

Defendant: Correct.

Counsel: And a Frisbee and a pair of trainers?

Defendant: I believe so...

Judge: May I inquire whether learned counsel has any purpose in detailing the contents of this car? Are we going to be taken through an itemised tour of the glove compartment?

Counsel: No, my lord. I am simply lulling the defendant into a feeling of false security with a series of easy questions so that when I finally bowl him the inswinger, he doesn't see it coming.

Defendant who maintained that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Judge: That is clearly nonsense. If all was for the best, we would not have Michael Howard as Home Secretary.

Defendant: Of course it is nonsense, my lord. But Pangloss would have said that all is for the best.

Judge: Would he have said that Michael Howard is all for the best?

Defendant: Pangloss was only a fictional character, my lord. But I feel sure that his creator, Voltaire, would have taken a dim view of Mr Michael Howard.

Judge: How can you be so sure?

Defendant: During his life, my lord, Voltaire was forced to flee from France, after publishing some works critical of the establishment, and take refuge in England, where he found a safe asylum. I fear he might have felt that this would have been harder with Michael Howard in charge of the Home Office.

Judge: Hmm. We seem to have strayed from... What is the case about?

Defendant: Leaving a car for two years in a "Disabled Only" space, m'lud. May I ask you, Mr Delba, what form your disablement takes?

Counsel: You are not, though, what one might call disabled?

Defendant: Not in a Panglossian sense.

Judge: What sense is that?

Defendant: Pangloss was the non-eponymous hero of Voltaire's work, *Candide*, m'lord. He was a philoso-

pher who maintained that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Counsel: In what sense?

Defendant: In the usual sense. I get letters in the wrong order.

Judge: You mean, you get the final demand first and the bill later???

Defendant: Very droll, m'lud.

Judge: Well, I don't think that is all funny! How can a judge make caustic comments about the

JAY 10/10/96

A public finance scandal in the making

The private partnership approach is a shabby way for politicians to claim the credit but avoid the reckoning

Here is a journalistic conspiracy theorist's guide to what sort of things go badly wrong in government. Look first for wheezes that allow big spending before – one thinks of the gush of shiny new headquarters, car fleets and refurbishment that followed the establishment of hospital trusts and government agencies.

Look next for a bland cross-party consensus about some fashionable idea – a sure sign of looming disaster. The vogue for killing off grammar schools and building tower blocks are obvious examples. And remember, third, that most serious problems seem, at first sight, to be too boring and complicated for normal people to concentrate on – military helicopter procurement; the details of the Child Support Agency; public interest immunity certificates.

Now, it may just be me, but is it not mildly alarming that the Private Finance Initiative sets off each of these three alarm bells? It allows government ministers to announce spending that they couldn't otherwise have sanctioned – £5bn of bridges, hospitals and computer systems so far. It is a wheeze that is keenly supported by everyone from Tory right-wingers to, in a slightly different form, Labour's John Prescott. And it is, at first sight, complex and dull (and second sight, and third).

But it is important. We must pour ourselves another coffee and concentrate. The basic idea is simple. In the past, governments paid private companies to build things, such as schools or roads. The bill was footed by the taxpayer.

Under the PFI the private sector doesn't just carry out a contract given

to it by a government department; it raises the money, manages and designs the project, and then helps to run it, too. The state, which because of tight public borrowing targets couldn't have raised the money itself, gets the project and pays the private company what is, in essence, a rent for using the facilities.

The private sector digs deeper into the ownership and management of things that were once wholly under the control of the state. It is a sort of "beyond privatisation" idea, something that the Tory right likes for ideological reasons. But it allows government to take the political credit for buildings and investments that, without private involvement, wouldn't have happened. The Tory left and the Labour Party like it for that reason.

And, party instincts aside, the PFI has some genuine merits. When the state simply paid the bills, we saw appalling examples of cost overruns, over-lavish outfitting and sheer managerial incompetence. The new British Library is a good example, and most areas of Britain have hospitals that took far too long to build and cost hideously more than expected. Under the PFI, the idea is that the private contractor shoulders more of the risk. If a bridge needs to be resurfaced after five years, the private partner pays.

But there are two or three obvious catches. Though risks can be neatly apportioned on paper (a truly complex business) in the end, a government cannot walk away from serious cock-ups in services bought on behalf of the public. If a bridge collapses or a hospital has to be closed, there are public duties on ministers and public costs that no contract will eradicate.

Cock-ups aside, the PFI may anyway

cost the taxpayer more than ordinary public spending. The state can borrow more cheaply than private companies through the gilt market, so the financing costs of these projects would be lower. True, this big benefit may be overwhelmed by the added efficiency of private management, and the transfer of risks to the private sector.

But no one knows. A recent paper from the merchant bank BZW said: "This may or may not be true, but it will be some time before the taxpayer really knows whether they have had a good deal or not..." Furthermore, as BZW also pointed out, the PFI is essentially a postponement of public spending. Taxpayers still shell out by paying a rent; the money just gets spent later than it would have done.

Who is supposed to make the difficult balancing calculation between the lower costs of ordinary public spending and the possible efficiency gains from private sector management of a project? Answer: the permanent sec-

retaries running each department, under pressure from ministers who want to be able to announce new projects.

There seems to be risk for everyone except the here-today, gone-tomorrow politician, who gets the political credit now, secure in the knowledge that any final reckoning will be postponed until after he or she has retired. No wonder politicians, irrespective of party allegiance, are so keen.

Under a government that has made a virtue of trying to pay back the national debt to lift the burden from future generations of taxpayers, this seems a short-term, even shabby, approach to spending. And since the PFI is bound to spending create companies dependent on such work, it will also create a new lobby for public spending. Whatever this is, it isn't public spending without tears.

Nor are the potential problems limited to the expense and new upward pressures for government spending. There are also serious policy questions. One recent PFI proposal to hand the power over court committee work – who stands trial where and when – to a private computer company was only stopped after angry intervention by judges and Opposition politicians.

Another proposal for the use of private capital to fund air traffic control was attacked last week by the chief executive of National Air Traffic Services, because a private sector operator would buy different equipment which could affect the efficiency of the system. If a private sector company is managing a hospital, even the non-clinical bit, doesn't that have implications for bed use? And so on. The PFI seems to me to try to disentangle management

and money, on the one hand, from effective political power on the other, and this is not possible.

Strangely, it may seem, those Treasury officials who held a briefing last week about the PFI will be delighted by this scepticism. Their pleasure comes from the fact that up to now the much-vaunted initiative, which dates back to November 1992, has been generally regarded as a Majorite damp squib, another bureaucratic-sounding kiss of deflating air.

Actually, though, the PFI is beginning to take off. Projects from the Channel tunnel rail link to the Skye bridge, from a new £250m hospital in Edinburgh to the other examples given above are beginning to tumble out of Whitehall. Initial caution from the Treasury and traditionalist civil servants is crumbling under the political pressure of a government constrained in how much it can borrow yet as keen as any government to make announcements about shiny new buildings.

So this is just the moment to become mildly alarmed. We, taxpayers and users of services, are effectively being offered public investment on hire purchase terms, in a system that will pass real powers from the state bureaucracy to private companies and in which lines of accountability are further blurred.

The complexity of the issues and the forbidding thicket of initials are enough to keep most people away from this subject. But a good conspiracy theorist would expect that the public spending scandals of 2010 are being hatched now, deep in the bowels of the PFI. And, however unfashionable it may be to say so, recent experience of government shows that the conspiracy theorists are often quite right.

comment

Peace comes before politics

Mo Mowlam explains why Labour will back elections in Ulster

We have had our differences with the Government over the past 18 months. On the face of it, not much. And perhaps that is the explanation for how two characters as different as Sir Patrick Mayhew and I could keep the balance between the parties at Westminster on Northern Ireland.

In Britain and Ireland, north and south, people often ask me what Labour's bipartisan approach means in practice. Do you and Sir Patrick sit down to plan the way forward? Does John Major call for your advice? The short answer to both is: no.

Labour decided to support the Government over Northern Ireland because its approach was based on agreements with the Irish government put into the Downing Street Declaration (1993) and the Joint Framework Document (1995). Our own policy of unity by consent is one of the options in those documents, which provide a firm basis for a consensus on a balanced settlement that can command the support of both communities. Building that consensus is what we would (and will) try to do, just as the British and Irish governments are trying to do.

Our support is based on principle and common sense. We want to put peace above party politics at Westminster. As the process stumbles on, I become more and more impressed by people's passionate desire for it to work. Even people with no interest in politics want the peace to hold and a just settlement to be reached. As a consequence, frustrations build up with what people see as the politicians' failure to give momentum to the process and to work to deliver an outcome.

I receive calls, letters, petitions and motions calling for faster progress. I understand and identify with these feelings and answer that the best way right now for Labour to help is to prevent the Government – with its knife-edge majority – being driven into the arms of the right and the pro-Unionist wing of the Tory party.

Westminster political arithmetic has so often affected the politics of the island of Ireland; we must do all we can to stop that happening again. But however hard we try, electoral arithmetic and pressures will be central to the agenda. They are put there as much by the media, and the public, as anyone else who wants to end this elaborate pre-general election positioning and get on with electing a government fit to govern.

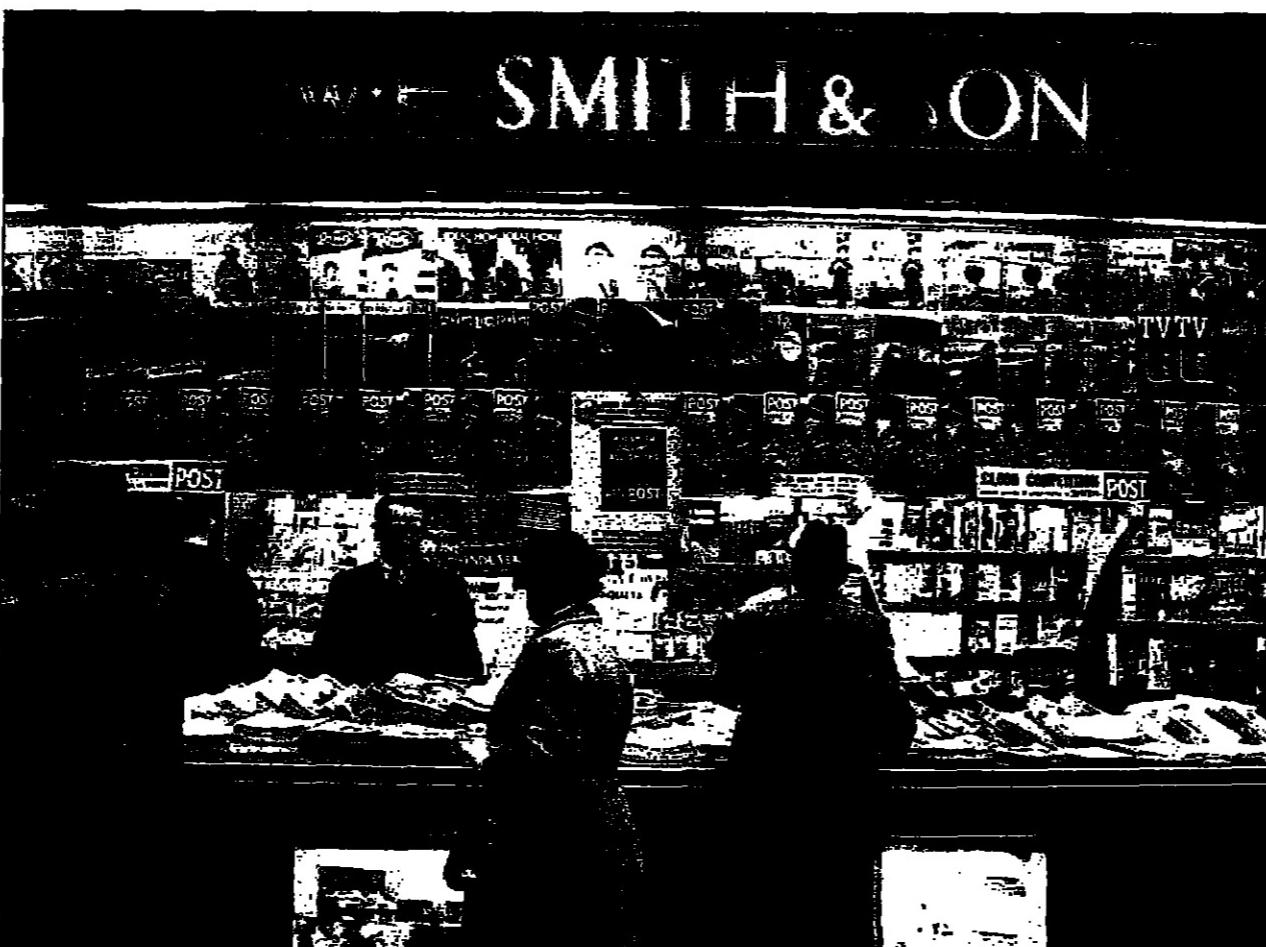
Publishing all parts of the package together would let all the parties know what they are buying into and bring us closer to the objective that we all share – an inclusive and meaningful process of negotiations covering all relationships, which starts on 10 June with all the eligible parties present.

The writer is Labour's shadow Northern Ireland secretary.

The new anti-porn weapon is shame. Will it wobble Smith's off the top shelf?

There is something shocking about magazines. One wall of every newsagent is covered with them – lurid, gleaming, overlapping ranks promising a near-infinity of choice, each one with a cover subtly designed to seduce the woman, the angler, the car freak and, with curves, rubber, leather and lace along the top shelf, the man.

So familiar is this brilliantly coloured spectacle that we hardly notice it other than as a



On the rack? Campaigners want WH Smith to behave according to its traditional 'family image'

In response the company has improved its system for allowing retailers to opt out of receiving some titles. In its old form this system failed regularly – embarrassingly it kept sending Shaheen porn mags however often he protested.

But, of course, Smith will still offer its 80 porn titles to anybody who wants them. The Campaign Against Pornography wants to stop the company doing this completely and Shaheen wants to ban the sale of top-shelf titles to under-18s and to insist that they all be sold in sealed plastic covers.

Applying moral pressure to compa-

nies in this way is an import

from America. There the Chris-

tian right wing has attempted to

call the bluff of corporate

responsibility.

Michael Medved, for example, led an

attack on Hollywood's associa-

tion with violence. And William

Bennett, a former secretary for

education and the author of the

hugely successful *The Book of*

Virtues, simply pointed out to

executives of Time Warner, the

biggest media group in the

world, the awfulness of much of

its violent and sex trash output.

Time Warner, he says, was sold

in sealed plastic covers. Applying

moral pressure to compa-

nies in this way is an import

from America. There the Chris-

tian right wing has attempted to

call the bluff of corporate

responsibility.

The Bennett approach is to

ask the executives what kind of

people they are. Do they want to

be remembered as godfathers of a

violent, pornographic society? The question

is demand for restraint on what is

released on video. That is a

familiar exercise of power, the

kind of moral pressure head

office can understand.

The Bennett approach is to

ask the executives what kind of

people they are. Do they want to

be remembered as godfathers of a

violent, pornographic society? The question

is up to its family business image.

The conflict is between freedom

– either of the market or

of the adult individual to con-

sume what he or she likes – and

virtue. The problem is that the

word "virtue" is ambiguous. It is

an awkward issue for, clearly,

Smith can be accused of

hypocrisy, flaunting respectabil-

ity when its own name is

attached to the sale, but happy to

exploit the market when its

role in the deal is concealed by

the independent newsagent.

Bennett, Medved, Shaheen

and the anti-porn campaigners

have spotted this awkwardness

and used it to embarrass com-

panies that would rather have

the contradiction buried by the

anonymous complexities of the

market. They have found a

new way of making their case by

publicising the role of compa-

nies as social institutions rather

than as blank profit-making

machines. The problem for the

new moralists find this

hypocrisy intolerable and yet a

useful pressure point. Their sud-

den appearance as opponents of

liberal capitalism indicates the

extent to which liberalism is

seen to have failed. For the

radical feminist liberalism

has failed because it appears to

institutionalise the exploitation of

women. For fundamentalists

it has failed because it does not

provide special protection for

their sensibilities. And, for the

moral right, it fails because it is

ideologically incapable of apply-

ing a transcendental concept of

virtue.

The corporate balancing act

in all this moral anger and con-

fusion has become more pre-

cious than ever. WH Smith

perhaps, but, in these frag-

mented, media-driven times,

moral apocalypses are every-

where, on every shelf, including

the top.

Protect Your Loved Ones With a Will



UBS chairman casts doubt on wisdom of merger

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

The prospect of a full-blown merger between Union Bank of Switzerland and CS Holding receded yesterday when Niklaus Senn, chairman of UBS, said he was sceptical about the benefits of co-operation with any rival.

An alarm mounted in the City about the threat of big redundancies in the London operations of the two banks if a £32bn merger did go ahead. Mr Senn said it was questionable whether joining with a competitor bank was an effective way to lower costs.

In London, UBS employs 2,500 and CS Holding, parent of Credit Suisse, CS First Boston and Credit Suisse Financial Products, employs 4,000. There are bound to be hundreds of London redundancies if a merger goes ahead, and there were reports yesterday that the total could reach thousands. Sources at the two banks said not even preliminary work had been done on the jobs fall-out.

In an interview with the Swiss business newspaper *Finanz & Wirtschaft*, Mr Senn did not refer to any rival bank by name. But the interview took place

earlier this week, days after Rainer Gut, chairman of CS Holding, suggested to him that the two Swiss banking giants should discuss a merger.

The talks about creating the world's second-biggest bank were confirmed on Tuesday and UBS's board meets this afternoon to decide a response.

Analysts displayed growing doubts but said there was still a strong possibility of the talks leading to moves that fall short of a full merger.

There is urgent pressure on the big three Swiss banks to deal with enormous overcapacity in their home markets and they are

also anxious to build international investment banking operations to rival the leading American houses.

One factor that could persuade the UBS board to keep the door open to talks is a shareholder's meeting in Zurich next Tuesday at which Martin Ebner, a dissident shareholder, will try to overturn the promotion of Robert Studer, the former chief executive, to chairman.

Mr Ebner has been complaining for years about low returns for shareholders in UBS. The news of the merger proposal has overshadowed the shareholder meeting and is

seen by analysts as helping UBS get Mr Ebner off its back.

If the talks are called off completely, the focus could switch back to Mr Ebner and the vote on Mr Studer's new job. In Switzerland, a win by Mr Ebner has not been ruled out.

Mr Senn was asked whether UBS believed a direct competitor would be a potential candidate for a co-operation agreement aimed at lowering costs. He replied: "It is not the job of the chairman of the board to comment on detailed questions of strategy. But it is fundamentally questionable whether this kind of solution is

effective at all and would lead to real cost reductions."

Mr Senn's remarks confirmed a growing view in the markets - though to be widely shared among UBS senior management - that the two banks overlap too much to make a full merger possible.

In London there are substantial overlaps in derivatives and bond trading. In corporate finance, CS First Boston is a more powerful force in the US, although there have been senior defections recently to UBS in New York. UBS has a stronger corporate finance track record in Europe. Analysts believe

15,000 retail banking jobs are at risk in Switzerland. Mr Senn also told *Finanz & Wirtschaft* that he believed UBS's retail banking activities had good chances in Switzerland.

CS Holding shares, which got off to a good start after news of the merger proposal emerged, slipped toward the end of the day and ended lower. UBS shares were under pressure from the start and closed almost 2 per cent lower. Dealers said the market was increasingly sceptical about the creation of a giant Swiss bank.

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Niklaus Senn: Merger strategy 'questionable'

Political row: Organisation distances itself from £50,000 initiative that sings the Government's praises

CBI snubs 'pro-Tory' campaign on economy

MICHAEL HARRISON

The Confederation of British Industry was embroiled in an embarrassing political row yesterday after refusing to endorse a campaign promoted by its incoming president, the British Airways chairman Sir Colin Marshall, extolling the Government's economic record.

The CBI's frantic attempt to distance itself from the controversial initiative is certain to cause friction in its ranks and was seized on yesterday by Labour.

Also among the dozen leading businessmen who have lent their names to the campaign are Sir David Lees, chairman of GKN, and Nigel Rudd, chairman of Williams Holdings and the glassmaker Pilkington, both of whom are members of the CBI's policy-making president's committee.

However, a CBI spokesman said: "We cannot endorse this campaign because we are not a party political organisation. Those who have backed it are

business leaders in their own right and they are entitled to do what they want in that capacity."

The initiative is estimated to have cost £50,000 and involves sending out 50,000 copies of a glossy brochure extolling the UK economy to other business leaders and opinion-formers.

The booklet is accompanied by a letter from the Prime Minister, John Major, and is similar to the last Conservative Party political broadcast, which used quotes from foreign newspapers and companies praising the UK economy.

The two organisers of the campaign - Sir Tim Bell, chairman of Lowe Bell, and Peter Gummer, chairman of the public relations firm Sandwick, are well known as senior advisers to the Conservative Party.

Andrew Smith, shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, said: "The Conservatives can produce as many glossy documents as they like in as many different guises but it will not make people feel any better about the economy. The fact remains that

hard-hit electors will not be convinced by brochures while they are living with the Tories' disastrous handling of the economy."

Among the companies quoted are Siemens, Philips, Toshiba and BMW, which describes Britain as "currently the most attractive country among all European locations for producing cars".

Sir Tim said funding was

raised by Mr Gummer through the Life's Better in Britain Foundation while Lowe Bell did the printing and distribution.

However, Sir Tim denied that it was a piece of party political propaganda. "In the sense that the Government is in charge of running the economic policy of the country it supports the Government. But there has been no attempt to be duplicitous or to deceive here and it is not a devious way of putting out Tory propaganda."

Sir Tim said subscriptions had come from the businessmen whose names appear in the booklet and "one or two others who are not mentioned". But a BA spokesman said Sir Colin had not made any financial contribution either directly or through the airline.

The other businessmen named are: Lord Hanson, chairman of Hanson, Christopher Lewin, chairman of TI, Sir Stanley Kalms, chairman of Dixons, Sir Nigel Mobbis, chairman of Slough Estates, Richard Oster, chief executive of Cookson, Dieter Bock, chief executive of Lomro, John Neill, chief executive of Unipart, and Lord Sheppard, former chairman of Grand Metropolitan and now chairman of London First.

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Never had it so good: Sir Colin Marshall (right), Nigel Rudd (top left) and Sir David Lees are feeling Better in Britain

Photo: PA



COMMENT

'It must have given Michael Heseltine much pleasure in signing up the News Corp chairman after all the cosying up Mr Blair has done to Mr Murdoch.'

The politicians clearly believe that there are more votes to be garnered from the information superhighway than just those of the anarchist brigade.

Last October New Labour brought out its big gun in the form of a pledge by BT to cable up every school and library in the land for free provided it was given the right to broadcast entertainment services on its network.

Now we know what the Government's secret weapon is – an offer from none other than Rupert Murdoch to place a satellite dish on top of every classroom in return for unfettered access to digital television – the technology of tomorrow.

BT and BSkyB are serious players and their willingness to line up on either side of the political trenches speaks volumes about the opportunities, not to mention the profits, to be had from the superhighway.

As an act on one-upmanship it must have given the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, much pleasure in signing up the News Corporation chairman after all the cosying up Tony Blair has done to Mr Murdoch.

But on closer inspection there is something that differs crucially between the two pacts with BT and News Corp. In BT's case Labour first has to deal with the small matter of getting into power. It is only then that the hard bargaining will begin. Meanwhile the party can bask in the reflected glory that comes from being in the vanguard of the

technology revolution, without actually having to deliver.

In the case of Mr Murdoch, however, the Government already appears to have delivered on its half of the bargain.

It may, of course, be pure coincidence that shortly after Messrs Heseltine and Murdoch hatched their plan over a discreet lunch six weeks ago, the Government introduced an amendment to the Broadcasting Bill that allows News Corp's 40 per cent-owned BSkyB full control of a licensed UK-based satellite service. At a stroke this would allow Mr Murdoch to send a digital satellite into space to beam back to UK homes. This in turn would free capacity on his existing Astra satellites, which are operated from Luxembourg, for use by BSkyB and its European pay-TV partners whilst radically extending the depth and spread of its reach in the UK through the much greater capacity that digital can handle.

The Government amendment could, of course, also give the Mirror Group the ability to operate its own domestic satellite service, but the most obvious beneficiary is News Corp.

Panic on the streets of Zurich

Anxiety and alarm were rampant yesterday in the corridors of the Canary Wharf operations of CS Holding and the

Broadgate offices of UBS, three miles away in the City of London. This is hardly surprising.

SBC's takeover last year of Warburg was a vivid demonstration of the pain caused by rationalisation in an investment bank. Large chunks of UBS and CS Holding's investment banking operations in London overlap.

The consequences do not need spelling out for the highly paid employees of the two banks. The next couple of years will be hell if the merger gets off the ground.

The rapidly emerging consensus in London and Zurich yesterday was that a full merger is unlikely to be achieved, regardless of what comes out of the UBS board meeting this afternoon.

Brokers' analysts who attended a meeting with Mathias Cabialavetta, the UBS chief executive, did not come away with an impression of a man raring to go in for some Anglo-Saxon-style financial engineering and corporate restructuring.

The real difficulty lies not with integrating the investment bank offshoots in London and New York, where the synergies in corporate finance and equities may well outweigh the disadvantages in overlapping fixed interest and derivatives businesses. On paper, the idea of what would essentially be a transatlantic alliance – because of CS First Boston's strength in New York – does look rather attractive for Swiss bankers with global ambitions.

The problem is with the overbanked

domestic Swiss market. UBS appears to have gone further down the road towards rationalising its branches than CS Holding, which has recently bought not one but two smaller rivals in the home market and is in the process of digesting them. There does not seem much appetite inside UBS's boardroom for sharing the pain with another bank that has not done as much or as fast.

However, it would be dangerous to dismiss this as ephemeral, or to see the lead on Tuesday as no more than a ploy by UBS to test investors' attention away from Martin Ebner, the dissident shareholder who next Tuesday plans to vote against the election of Robert Studer as the new chairman. This week's events may be the start of a long-winded process that does lead to some form of co-operation and rationalisation.

By all accounts, the pressure within Switzerland to sort out the overpriced, overstuffed and overbranched banking market is very great. The concern that something must be done is shared by the Swiss Banking Commission. For UBS and CS Holding even to discuss a merger is a breakthrough of a sort.

If UBS were smaller, CS Holding might short-circuit the board's opposition with a hostile bid which – contrary to widespread belief – is not completely out of the question in Switzerland, in spite of the country's very different views on corporate governance. CS Holding made a hostile bid for Bank Leu in 1990. It is sheer size and the

complexity of shareholding structures that rule out a hostile attack among the big three banks.

Colour-coding at the CBI

Memo to Sir Colin Marshall: You may not take over as president of the Confederation of British Industry until May but the important thing to bear in mind always is that this is a "non-political" organisation.

We appreciate that your *Better in Britain* booklet is designed to promote our economy and the joys of doing business here.

But to the untrained eye it could look like a piece of Conservative Central Office propaganda. Perhaps it has something to do with all that blurb on the cover or the accompanying letter from Mr Major on the role of Sir Tim Bell in putting it all together.

Or perhaps it has something to do with the booklet's striking resemblance to the last Tory party political broadcast and the cut of the other chaps who have lent their endorsement. Lord Hanson is, after all, not renowned for his socialist instincts.

The folk at the CBI run a mile from being branded political animals, which is perhaps why they have declined to endorse your effort.

But don't worry – you'll be seeing a lot of the president's council in the year ahead. At least two of them are on your side.

Granada will take time over disposals

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Granada, the media and leisure giant, is in no hurry to sell off £2bn worth of assets earmarked for disposal. Charles Allen, the company's chief executive, said yesterday.

"There is no timetable, and the real objective is maximising returns to our shareholders," he said as Granada unveiled its first trading statement since winning its £3.9bn hostile bid for Forte, the hotels and restaurants company.

He said the company intended to drive a hard bargain with potential purchasers, and would not do deals at low prices, despite having taken on debts of £3.5bn to finance the takeover.

Granada has said it would sell Forte's Welcome Break motorway service operations, its Exclusive and Meridien hotels

and stakes in the Savoy Group and Alpha Airports, in order to reduce debt. Analysts speculated that Whitbread, the food and drink company, would be the leading contender for the Welcome Break sites.

The stakes in Alpha and the Savoy would be sold by the end of the financial year, in September, Mr Allen hinted yesterday. He identified a "strategic buyer" for Alpha, probably another airports catering company, and said a "buyer acceptable to the management and the owners" would be found for the 68 per cent minority voting stake held in the Savoy.

The Wontner family, which controls the luxury hotels group, fought a long battle with Sir Rocco Forte, who had attempted a takeover. Mr Allen said relations between Granada and the Wontners were good. "There isn't the antagonism that there was between Forte and the Savoy," he said.

The Meridien and Exclusive chains would be auctioned once a list of "pre-qualifying buyers" was determined. Mr Allen said Sir Rocco, who has been seeking financing to win back some of his hotel empire, would be welcome to make an offer.

Mr Allen added that the company would easily reach its goal of enhancing profits from the Forte operations by £100m in the first year, by cutting overheads and centralising purchasing. Granada has already shed 100 jobs at Forte, and expects to make further layoffs.

Granada has also pushed prices higher at its hotels and restaurants. But Mr Allen insisted consumers would be getting value. "If I have to pay £15 for an afternoon tea, it had better be good. At some Forte hotels, some of it was not."

In the hotels division, the

Brussels looks set to block Lonrho-Gencor merger

MICHAEL HARRISON

Speculation is mounting that Brussels will block the planned link up between Lonrho and South African group Gencor to create the world's second biggest platinum producer.

It is thought that the European Commission's mergers task force has come down against the merger and that its

decision was backed by a meeting of Tuesday of an advisory committee consisting of competition policy officials from member states.

Lonrho sources indicated yesterday that both bodies had blocked the merger, which would create a grouping with production of about 1.6 million ounces of platinum a year.

However, that may not be

entirely bad news for Lonrho as it could ease the way for the world's biggest platinum producer to increase its stake in Lonrho's mining operations when the planned demerger from the group's trading and hotels business takes place this summer.

Anglo-American already owns 10 per cent of Lonrho and is thought to want to raise its

stake to just under 30 per cent.

Last month Anglo snapped up Tiny Rowland's 5.9 per cent stake in Lonrho for £91m and secured first right of refusal to buy chief executive Dieter Bock's 18.5 per cent stake should he decide to sell.

Anglo refused to comment on suggestions that the South African group was now seeking to secure a fixed price option on

the Bock stake though analysts believe he would sell it off for £250 a share.

But analysts said it was clear that Anglo was intent on emerging as a significant minority shareholder in Lonrho's platinum, gold and coal mining operations when they are demerged from its trading and hotel businesses this summer.

"It would be very happy,

when the break-up occurs, to own about 30 per cent of the mining companies," said one Johannesburg-based analyst.

The main attraction for Anglo is Lonrho's 41 per cent stake in Ashanti Goldfields but it also has a majority stake in coal producer Duiker Exploration and is merging its platinum interests with those of Gencor of South Africa.

IN BRIEF

• Hundreds of Barings bondholders, who lost £100m when the bank collapsed last year in the wake of £800m losses incurred by rogue trader Nick Leeson, yesterday applied to the courts to start legal action against two Barings holding companies in administration. If leave to commence action is granted by the Companies Court, the bondholders action group plans to issue writs, alleging omission and untrue or misleading statements, against all Barings directors, including Peter Baring, Andrew Tuckey and Peter Norris. A decision by the court is expected in about two months. The bondholders also plan to issue writs against the three issuing houses involved: Hoare Govett Corporate Finance, Cazenove & Co and Barclays de Zoete Wedd.

• A handful of signs of recovery in the UK economy emerged yesterday, balancing earlier gloomy figures on manufacturing output. The leading indicators for the economy rose in February for the first time in more than 18 months, pointing to faster growth later this year. Separate figures from the Finance and Leasing Association showed near-record levels of growth in finance for business investment in February. The FLA reported that demand for finance for new plant and equipment jumped by 63 per cent in the 12 months to February, to £917m. There was a huge rise, of 291 per cent to £317m, in finance for projects over £5m. Demand for high street credit and new car finance remained strong.

• The Government has raised almost £80m from the sale of its residual stakes in six water companies. SBC Warburg won the auction to buy the shares in a single block, bidding slightly above Tuesday's closing prices, and is thought to have already placed the stock. The shares disposed of represented around 1 per cent or less of Hyder (formerly Welsh Water), Anglian Water, Southern Water, Yorkshire Water, Thames Water and United Utilities. The Government has retained stakes in South West Water, Western Water and Severn Trent because of potential bids.

• Japan's current account surplus shrank in February thanks to strong import growth and an increase in overseas travel by the Japanese. The surplus for the month was ¥745.9bn, 39 per cent lower than a year earlier. Imports of goods soared by 46 per cent during the 12 month period, compared with a 16.6 per cent rise in exports. The deficit on trade in services rose to ¥510.9bn, up from ¥417.4bn a year earlier.

• Former Walt Disney Studios chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg is believed to have filed a suit against the Walt Disney company claiming he is owed 2 per cent of profits for many of the movies, TV shows and other deals he made during his employment at the group. He estimates that 2 per cent will come to \$250m.

• The price of oil jumped to its highest since November 1991. The price of the benchmark Brent crude for May delivery jumped \$1.10 to \$21.80 a barrel by 6.15pm. Oil stocks have been severely depleted by the bitter winter. The price has also been influenced by US refinery problems and the expectation that United Nations talks about Iraqi supplies will not reach an early agreement.

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The flight prices shown are the cost *Independent/Independent* on Sunday readers will pay for two tickets using this offer.

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	PRAGUE		£229
	BUDAPEST		£339
	ST PETERSBURG		£399
	ASIA/PACIFIC	Buenos Aires	£1,159
	BANGKOK	Caracas	£869
	DELHI	Mexico City	£729
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business

Uncertain market for Smurfit

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

The outlook for the paper cycle has seldom been so uncertain and Jefferson Smurfit, the Irish paper giant, is not alone in being unable to guess whether the recent industry inventory correction represents a de-stocking pause or the end of the cycle.

After soaring last year, prices in some areas of the industry have come rattling back down again. Pulp, for instance, is now selling for around \$500 a ton compared with \$925 in October. At the same time there is no shortage of capacity, particularly in the US where new plant is set to further increase supplies of the corrugated board used in packing cases.

All this gloom is hard to reconcile with Smurfit's bounding optimism six months ago and yesterday's announcement of record 1995 profits totalling £640m (£433m), the highest ever seen by a Irish company. But Dermot Smurfit, joint deputy chairman, refuses to be downbeat.

Certainly, the group has world-leading positions in areas ranging from boxes and cartons to the container board that goes into them. It also supplies much of the paper used to make its own products, helping to reduce exposure to the more volatile parts of the paper markets. Smurfit points out, for example, that the fall in price of corrugated boxes - from around \$873 a ton in the autumn to \$820 now - is nothing like the drop in other areas. Smurfit's wide geographical spread also helps to spread risk.

These strengths meant the group was able to cash in on last year's price recovery, although the results were distorted by acquisitions and a change of year end in 1994. The first full 12 months of Cellulose du Pin, the paper and packaging operations of Saint-Gobain acquired for £684m in 1994, boosted profits from continental operations from £134.6m to £195m last year.

Even so, with a return on capital well in excess of 20 per cent last year, the group has a fair chance of achieving its target of 15 per cent across the business cycle. The problem is that, given the integration of the world-wide industry, Smurfit's strengths become weaknesses in a downturn. Along with rivals, Jefferson Smurfit Corporation, the group's 46 per cent-owned separately quoted associate in the US, had to shut mills at the end of last year. Profits cut to £260m this year would put the shares, up 3p to 163p, on a low forward multiple of 10. Apart from uncertainty over the cycle, Smurfit's rating suffers from the group's state of limbo between the Irish market, which it has clearly outgrown, the UK and the US. The expected appointment

of a new chief operating officer in the next few months will help clear up corporate governance worries in the UK, but it has still not been fully welcomed into the British investment community. A recovery may be some way off yet.

A smart turn-out from Moss Bros

In a low inflation, highly competitive menswear market, producing an impressive performance from Moss Bros. Coupled with a healthy growth programme, and on a relatively fixed cost base, profits really took off, jumping 53 per cent in the year to January.

The £1.1m pre-tax profits for the 12-month period represented a 31.3 per cent return on shareholders funds, a chunky improvement on last year's 22 per cent return and a massive increase on the 5 per cent return on assets recorded in the bleak days of the early-1990s recession.

Investors shared in the good news with a 50 per cent rise in the full-year dividend to 18p (12p), almost four times the payout five years ago. Despite heavy and rising capital expenditure, strong

positive cashflow has kept the south London-based group's cash balances at almost half shareholders' funds.

That financial security underpinned the addition of 22 shops last year to take the total to 129 by the year end. A further 10 or 12 are planned every year for the rest of the decade and the company is confident the intrinsic operational gearing of the business will ensure that margins continue rising during that period.

How Moss Bros has bucked the trend on the high street is something of a mystery, explained only in the vaguest terms by the company - providing better service, creating a welcoming atmosphere - but no one will argue with the figures.

The Moss Bros formula, now spread over Savoy Taylor's Guild, Suit Company and Cecil Gee, is working.

Investors who have seen the shares rise almost eightfold during the past three years certainly have no gripes. Since the beginning of 1993, the shares have outperformed the market by more than 300 per cent, rising from 13p to yesterday's 795p, up another 36p on the day.

What Moss Bros seems to have got right is to realise that shopping for most men is a bit of a penance. Making the process as easy as possible ensures return trade and encourages higher spending on each trip - to get it all out of the

way. With prices rising by a negligible 3 per cent last year, volume is the key, so an increase in market share from 7 to 9 per cent and a further jump in sales per employee are encouraging signs.

On forecast profits of £14.2m this year, the shares trade on a prospective p/e of 15. That represents an 8 per cent premium to the rest of the market, but in the context of 26 per cent earnings growth it is justified. Still good value.

Yule builds on its reputation

Yule Catto has managed to reduce earnings per share only once in the 15 years. Most investors will be happy to forgive the chemicals group that one blemish on its record, particularly since it related to losses on a Dutch building products subsidiary in 1993 when the construction industry was hardly booming.

Yesterday's figures for 1995 served only to reinforce the group's solid reputation for growth. Pre-tax profits up 16 per cent to £33.1m for the 12 months to December were only a tad less than expectations six months ago, despite a ferocious year for raw material prices. Styrene, one of the group's key inputs, doubled between the second and third quarters and has since come back down to where it was at the beginning of the year.

It was therefore hardly surprising that Yule suffered a margin squeeze of more than 1 per cent in the second half. It did well to hold the drop in operating margins over the year to just 0.2 per cent, leaving them at a still healthy 8.8 per cent.

The continuing recovery in building products, which encompass businesses like roof lights, office partitions and sheet plastic helped the figures. The division did well to raise profits from £6.3m to £7.61m in the face of a dismal UK construction market, reflecting continuing benefits from shaking up the business three or four years ago.

The outlook should now be set fair for a period of more stability for the group. Order books on the building side are back to "sensible" levels, chemical volumes look like holding up and, more importantly, steadier raw material prices should allow margins to bounce. Profits of £38m this year would put the shares, unchanged at 356p, on a market rating of 14.5.

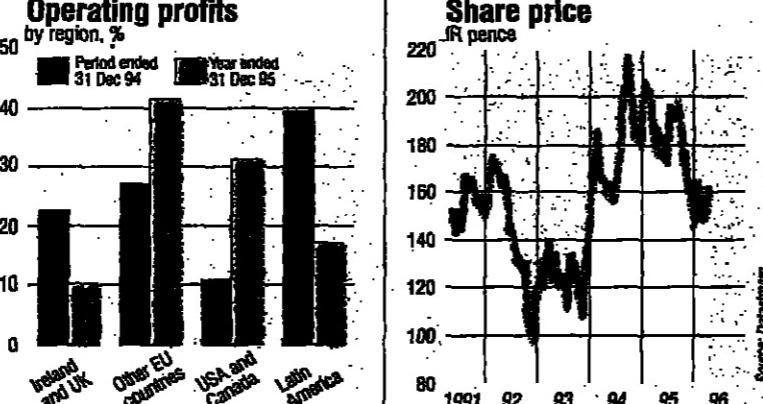
Still reasonable value, although the 20 per cent family holding and 29 per cent held by Kuala Lumpur Kepong, a Malaysian plantation group, make for a tight market.

Jefferson Smurfit at a glance

Market value: £1.75bn, share price 163p

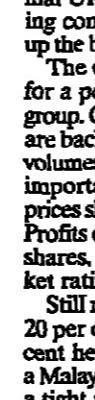
5-year record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (IREbn)	1.23	1.26	1.47	1.71	3.03
Pre-tax profits (IREbn)	15.8	65.8	47.8	31.7	42.0
Earnings per share (IRE pence)	12.2	3.9	3.6	29.6	28.0
Dividends per share (IRE pence)	0.6	3.1	2.0	2.7	4.0

Operating profits



Share price

IRE pence



Source: Bloomberg

FI shares well ahead on first day

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

pany in 1962 and still owns 5.3 million shares in FI. Her stake was worth over £15m at yesterday's closing price.

Hilary Cropper, chief executive since 1987, saw the value of her 917,000 options soar. The exercise price of those options, which were granted between 1988 and 1993, range from just 27p a share to 44.9p a share. In addition to her options, Ms Cropper has a beneficial interest in 764,000 shares, worth more than £2m.

The flotation also created a valuable share stake for Sir Peter Thompson, the former chairman of NIFC and since 1990 FI's non-executive chairman, whose 890,000 share holding is worth almost £2.7m.

Deputy chief executive Jo Connell's holding was yesterday valued at £1.5m. A buoyant market debut had been expected for FI after initial soundings by joint sponsors UBS and Granville came up with demand for six times the

7.9m shares that the company finally decided to place.

Investors focused on the strong growth in profits from FI in recent years as it has cashed in on the increasing trend for companies to contract out their information technology requirements. Unlike some other parts of the computer sector, the facilities and applications management work that FI specialises in has been reliable, predictable and currently fast growing revenues.

Although the price at which FI closed yesterday represents a substantial multiple of forecast earnings for the year ending this month, strong profits growth in the year to April 1997 is expected to bring the rating lower.

On the basis of forecast earnings of 11.3p this year the shares stand on a prospective p/e ratio of 27, well in excess of the ratings enjoyed by most of FT's peers, including Logica, Capita, Misys and Sema.

IN BRIEF

• Rank said yesterday trading in the first quarter was satisfactory and it saw encouraging prospects for the current year. The leisure group's annual meeting gave chairman Sir Denys Henderson the opportunity to welcome the government's recently published consultation document on bingo and casinos. "It is not yet clear how much of it will become law but potentially it is good news and should address many of our concerns." Yesterday's meeting was the last for Michael Gifford, who hands over as chief executive to Andrew Teare, the former head of English China Clays.

• Zeneca Agrochemicals has been granted its first registration for Amistar, a new broad spectrum fungicide. German authorities have given approval for its use on cereal crops for the control of diseases which can seriously reduce crop yield and quality. Test marketing of Amistar will start in May. The market for fungicides for cereal crops in Germany is worth around \$320m a year, about six per cent of the world market.

• Headlam, the floorcoverings and fabrics company, announced a 33 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £7.7m, despite what the company described as "generally difficult economic conditions". Ian Kirkham, chief executive, said: "The resilient results achieved during 1995 demonstrate yet again the group's ability to succeed." Headlam's shares, which at the beginning of 1992 traded at just 36p closed 15p higher yesterday at 248p.

• Ruberoid, the waterproofing systems group spun off from Tarmac in 1993, announced lower pre-tax profits of £8.1m (£8.4m) in the year to December. David Kendall, chairman, warned that the cold weather at the beginning of 1996 would also prevent first half figures matching last year's result. Despite the lower figures, the dividend for the year increased from 6.0p to 6.1p, reflecting the resilience of our manufacturing and distribution businesses and the ability of their management teams to react to discouraging trading conditions."

• Hammerton, the property developer and investor, has acquired a 9.2 per cent interest in Markeaton Shopping Centre in Derby for £81.5m. The acquisition, which comprises a suburban shopping centre within a major retail complex built in the 1960s, shows an initial yield of 7 per cent. It is almost fully let with a quarter of the shops currently let at rents below the market rate.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
AAF Industries (F)	21.2m (41.2m)	-0.95m (2.9m)	-1.34p (12.25p)	n/a (n/a)
Alpha Airports (F)	55.8m (47.7m)	20.8m (21.4m)	0.24p (10.03p)	5p (4.8p)
Headlam Group (F)	120m (110m)	7.7m (5.8m)	12.8p (10.1p)	4.8p (4.6p)
Intermediate Capital (F)	- (1)	19.1m (18.1m)	27.4p (26.3p)	13.4p (11.5p)
Moss Bros (F)	87.5m (71.1m)	11.3m (7.4m)	42.43p (27.12p)	18p (12p)
Racecourse (F)	16.8m (14.5m)	0.02m (0.21m)	0.01p (0.16p)	n/a (n/a)
Rubberoid (F)	240m (240m)	8.0m (8.4m)	10.4p (11.9p)	6.1p (6.0p)
Sentry Publishing (F)	7.32m (7.01m)	1.5m (0.98m)	22.8p (15.6p)	5.1p (5.0p)
Voice Catto (F)	351m (337m)	93.1m (28.8m)	20.3p (17.3p)	8p (7p)

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Nationwide makes sharp cut in bid for lost youth

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

Nationwide Building Society

hit the headlines for two reasons this week. It introduced the lowest mortgage rate

since 1965 and its chief executive,

Brian Davis, 51, shaved off his moustache.

"There is no connection at

all," Mr Davis protested unconvincingly yesterday.

"Shaving the mortgage rate

just happened to coincide.

I've shaved my moustache off

before - the last time was a

year ago, for charity. I'll have

to wait for my family's verdict

to see whether it grows back.

Some people say it makes me

look younger."

Yesterday the Liberal

Democrats like to be upstaged by Labour, and so yesterday the Lib Dems wrote to SBC Warburg with their plans for "reacquiring a controlling interest in Railtrack" following privatisation. Labour already know their own plans will be included in the prospectus to be published on Monday, under the heading "political risk".

Bankers were haring

ikes share
lost youth
RY

DATA BANK			
FT-SE 100	3767.4	+8.8	
FT-SE 250	4387.1	+10.0	
FT-SE 350	1896.1	+1.4	
SEAO Volume	\$14.8m shares		
SEAO Index	344.45	+0.21	
SHARE SPOTLIGHT			
Bullion	1280	1260	1240
1220	1200	1180	1160
AM J A S O N D J F M A	Price	Change	Yield

Surge in oil price pushes BP shares to a record high

British Petroleum helped to inspire blue chips as the booming crude oil price spurred its shares to the highest level in their history.

Only four years ago BP was down in the dumps with its shares bumping along at 182p. Yesterday they climbed 6.5p to 586p in busy trading.

Oils have been strong as crude prices have made steady progress. With Brent riding above \$21 a barrel - the highest for nearly four years - and expected to go higher, the oil flame could prompt explosive share performances.

Shell gained 7p to 878p and Enterprise added 5p to 450p.

The excitement helped to produce an 8.8-point gain to 3767.4 for the FT-SE 100 index leaving it just 13.9 from its peak. The blue-chip index, measuring the 100 top shares, has lagged behind the secondliners since stretching to a record in February. But the

supporting index, recording the behaviour of the next 250 shares, has with almost monotonous regularity ventured to new highs. It managed yet another with a 10-point gain to 4387.1.

There was also just a hint that the elusive "feel-good" factor had filtered into the stock market. Building and related shares, if somewhat belatedly, enjoyed the latest shots in the mortgage war and an upbeat Confederation of British Industry report contributed to the more buoyant atmosphere.

The odd takeover story continued to do the rounds and many investors remained captivated by thoughts of share buy-backs and the payment of special dividends.

In a lively media sector Mirror Group led the field with a 1.2p gain to 232p in busy trading. There was the usual talk of a bid, with Carlton Communications the favourite to

strike. But an investment meeting attended by David Montgomery, Mirror's chief executive, in New York was probably the main influence.

Banks firmed on the merger talks between Switzerland's two biggest banks Credit Suisse and Union Bank.

Standard Chartered was a leading beneficiary, jumping 13p to 650p. The market alighted on the story that Switzerland's third banking power, Swiss Bank Corporation, would respond to any new alliance by hitting the takeover trail.

Standard, down to 292p a

year ago, would be a clear candidate for SBC's attention; so

would the Scottish banks, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland. Royal rose 13p to 504p and BoS 4p to 257.5p.

The feeling was that SBC

would be particularly attracted to a UK bank to allow it to

build on its main London acquisitition, the merchant bank SG Warburg.

Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch

food and soap giant, missed the fun. The shares fell 10p to 1,185p, just above their 12-month low. The BSE crisis has taken its toll but the market is more perturbed about the group's pedestrian trading outlook.

Water shares drifted lower

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

of the year

as the Government sold many of its residual shareholdings, raising £75m.

Warburg took on the shares, in Anglian, Hyder, Southern, Thames, United Utilities and Yorkshire, for on-sale to institutions. Interests in three water companies where takeover

action is threatened have been retained. Biggest of the stakes was 3.5 million shares in Thames.

Mercury Asset Management improved 19.5p to 916p as Merrill Lynch made positive noise and MFI, the furniture group, continued to draw strength from Kleinwort Benson support, gaining a further 5p to 171p.

British Biotech had an uncomfortable session, retreating 58p to 2,380p, but Cortecs International rose 23p to 310p following what appeared to be a significant step forward in its testing of an orally delivered drug for osteoporosis; stock

market report/shares

TAKING STOCK

Television Corporation is bugging new highs at 139p. Hopes of profit upgrades are in the air.

US deals are likely soon and some believe current estimates of £2.9m for the year to end June are too cautious and a figure nearer £3.3m will be substituted.

Flying Flowers, the Jersey-based distributor of fresh flowers, is near to making a substantial acquisition; the shares shaded to 177p.

A Californian diamond mine, expected to become a top producer, should bring a sparkle to Waverley Mining.

Shares of Diadem Resources, the operating company, have surged from \$2 to \$7 and are now more than \$5. Waverley has more than 3 million of them and the upside adds around 10p to its assets per share.

Killik & Co expect a big marketing deal to follow. FirstBus fell 2p to 178p as James Capel placed 100,000 shares at 178p and London Scottish

Bank lost 3.5p to 106p following a 650,000 placing by Barclays.

Renam, the paper group, put on 7p to 403p as Swiss takeover hopes lingered and Alvis, the defence group, rose 5p to 168p on persistent bid speculation.

FL the software group, made a stunning debut; placed at 235p the shares shot to 300p in brisk trading. But another newcomer had a much more miserable time. Placed last week at 240p Avocet Mining fell a further 4p to 233p.

Queens Moat Houses firms to 23.75p and Sentry Farming rose 44p to 218p on a profits jump and a planned acquisition. Signet, the jeweller, gained a further 2.5p to 33.5p on disposal hopes.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: x Rights issue; Ex Rights ex-dividend date; u Listed Securities Market; Suspended; np Party Paid; pn No Paid Shares.

Source: Finstat.

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Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock Volumes Stock Volumes Stock Volumes Stock Volumes

FT-SE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 3767.4 up 3.6 11.00 3767.8 up 8.2 14.00 3767.9 up 8.2

09.00 3769.1 up 10.5 12.00 3773.8 up 12.5 15.00 3787.1 up 8.2

10.00 3783.5 up 9.5 13.00 3782.4 up 8.5 16.00 3784.9 up 8.2

Close 3782.4 up 8.5

FT-SE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 3762.2 up 3.6 11.00 3767.8 up 8.2 14.00 3767.9 up 8.2

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Close 3782.4 up 8.5

FT-SE 100 Index hour by hour

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09.00 3769.1 up 10.5 12.00 3773.8

Weight of the world hangs on the lucky Chancellor



ECONOMIC VIEW
DIANE COYLE

Kenneth Clarke has earned himself a reputation as a good Chancellor of the Exchequer. And one of his marks of success in the office is the fact that he feels no great need to be doing something all the time. This lack of activism recognises an important truth about the UK economy: it depends far more on what happens in the rest of the world than what happens here.

The Government's dependence on external events to set the economy to rights has been partially recognised. A recent article by a Labour peer, Meghnad Desai, stimulated a debate about whether the Government will be able to cash in on an improvement in the state of the economy before the election. Thanks to windfalls such as maturing Tessas and free building society shares, Lord Desai suggested, a consumer spending boomlet and housing market revival could replenish the electorate's reservoir of feel-good just in time to end the Conservatives' drought at the polls.

The question of whether Mr Clarke's famous luck will hold in the run-up to the election, however, depends on far wider events than these stimuli to consumers. The course of business cycles in the rest of the world will both influence growth here directly and set the limits to its policy in the UK.

This balance can tilt either way – either a dream or a nightmare for a Chancellor hoping to retain office. For the US and the European economies are tugging in different directions. They are at different stages of their economic cycles, and the timing will be everything in their impact on Britain.

The US is pulling out of a tem-

porary slowdown into what looks like an impressive new spurt of recovery. The American jobs machine is working overtime, with an average of 206,000 new jobs a month created so far this year, compared with 142,000 a month towards the end of last year. Incomes and spending have risen, while survey evidence is turning favourable. The remaining weak spot is manufacturing industry.

Meanwhile, Europe's biggest economy is on the brink of recession.

Yesterday's figures for German un-

employment and other recent indicators have confirmed expectations that GDP will be flat this year. Other Continental economies are slowing down along with their most important market. Although they are less ridden with gloom than Germany, high and lasting unemployment across the Continent symbolises its economic woes. Most forecasters predict a European recovery – but not yet.

Mr Clarke's dream scenario will be realised if the US recovery is not too fast and the European slowdown not too severe. If US growth stays around the pace it has set in the first quarter of this year it will have reached the point above which Fed

interest rates worked quickly. British exports to the rest of Europe would not be depressed either.

The growth outlook can be painted even brighter when other areas of the world are taken into account. Bullish economists at the US investment bank Morgan Stanley think world GDP growth will be nearly as strong this year as last, and could return next year to its fastest since the late 1980s boom. They predict continuing recovery in Japan, a swing out of recession in Latin America, and further rapid expansion in Asia outside Japan. This last area accounts for a bigger share of world GDP (23 per cent) than Eu-

rope (21 per cent).

Secondly, there could be a Euro-

exchange rate crisis brought on by

the final 'if' in the dream scenario concerns inflation. If faster growth and lower interest rates later this year did not have any impact on inflation until after Britain's general election, Mr Clarke would be able to carry off a few crucial months as an extraordinary balancing act. He would be able to present growth near his 3 per cent target and inflation within striking distance of the 2.5 per cent target. This would confound almost all of the economics profession and make the Chancellor look lucky on a visionary scale.

However, a few twists of timing and degree in the world economy would turn the dream into a nightmare. If the American economy accelerates to the point where the Fed feels forced to raise interest rates, and if the Bundesbank thinks recovery will come soon enough that it does not need to cut its rates, there would be pressure for an increase in Britain's base rate. Exports to the US – 13 per cent of the total last year – would perform well, but exports to the EU – 58 per cent of the total – would remain sluggish. Britain's recovery would be delayed.

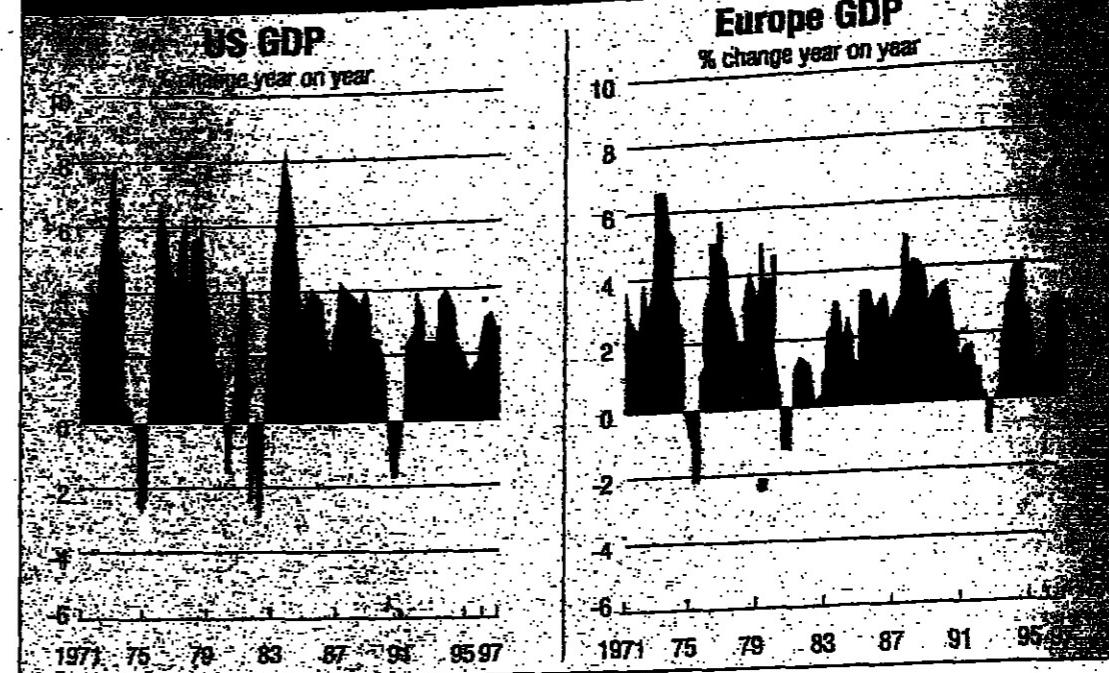
Tighter monetary policy would become essential if two other things happened. One, inflation might head upwards early. Monetarists have pointed out that policy has loosened across the globe. Although the general level of commodity prices, a classic early inflationary warning signal, is lower than a year ago, food and energy prices are rising again. The Bank of England's UK-specific commodity index has started to climb and was up 3.5 per cent in the year to December. The oil price is at its highest since the Gulf War.

Secondly, there could be a Euro-

tensions over the creation of a single currency. The foreign exchange markets see sterling as a weak currency, prone to political risk, and the pound would dive along with the Italian lira and Spanish peseta.

If the timing went wrong, the Chancellor would face the prospect of having to tighten policy at a time of sluggish growth – or admit that he had given up on his inflation target. (There would certainly be sirens voices urging him not to sacrifice growth for the sake of shaving an extra percentage point or two off inflation.)

US & European growth



Europe GDP

% change year on year

10
8
6
4
2
0
-2
-4
-6
-8
-10

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Dream time in morning rush hour

Sue Montgomery sees Classic hopes in a spring ritual on Newmarket Heath

Whispering hoofbeats at dawn, and Newmarket's age-old ritual is underway. With the first racecourse trials for the Classics less than a week away, the pulse of this 2,500-horse town in Suffolk and the pace of life on the training grounds have quickened perceptibly in recent weeks.

And yesterday morning was the busiest yet, as some of the names which may become household ones were through their elegant paces on the haltered Limekilns. The first horses to emerge were almost shadows in the half-light, but the substance was soon revealed under a tiful, watery sunrise.

The Limekilns, so-called after the ancient brickworks on the site, are the carefully guarded jewel amid Newmarket's 1,500 acres of gallops. Here, the turf has lain undisturbed for centuries, and has a unique

hoof-friendly quality. Horses are not allowed to disturb it during wet winter weather, and its opening by Jockey Club Estates – its guardians – in the spring is zealously awaited each year by local trainers.

Imagine a roughly triangular open sweep, bounded by tall hedge banks on two long sides, with the apex by the traffic lights on the junction of the Bury and Thetford roads, and the base, more than a mile distant, a strip of Douglas pines marking a track between the Limekilns and the adjacent Waterfall gallops. The land is undulating, mimicking the descent into the Dip and rise to the winning post of the Rowley Mile racecourse.

After daybreak, during the two hours between seven and nine o'clock, an industry gets to work. The first string to appear yesterday was that of David Loder, reduced – despite the

appearance of the old maestro Lester Piggott on Prince Of Andros – to the role of a supporting act. For the stable star, Blue Duster, does not work until this morning.

From other yards came cameo performances of varying quality. Classic Eagle, the flag-bearer of the troubled Classic Thoroughbreds ownership company, finished ahead of his companions, but had his ears scrubbed off to do so. The game handicaps mare Lap Of Luxury appeared to thoroughly enjoy herself in what proved virtually a solo spin. John Gos-

den's Derby colts, Sacho, Pompadour and Lord Of Men, strutted their stuff on Tuesday, but yesterday the Stanley House Oaks prospect Kerry King caught the eye in her breeze with Catimella. Another filly, the Michael Stoute-trained Dance Sequence, seems to have progressed well over the winter and finished clear of her group.

Luca Cumani's filly Papering has developed physically over the winter, more markedly than the stable's Derby hope. But the Bedford House star yesterday was undoubtedly Smart Alec. The four-year-old, due to

run at Newmarket's Craven meeting next week, powered six lengths clear of Midnight Legend and Suprizi without apparent effort.

But the main action was yet to come. As Henry Cecil took up station on his grey hack, surrounded by a posse of scribes from Warren Place appeared like Indians on the skyline nearly a mile away, tiny figures forming into groups of three and four for their charge towards the watchers. One's sympathies were with Caster.

In the first wave, all eyes were looking for Bosra Sham, and the

1,000 Guineas favourite did not disappoint. The chestnut filly was not asked much, but the manner in which she cruised alongside the colt Storm Trooper with Tony McGlone sitting motionless was noted by most, and by the end of the day the well-oiled bookmakers' telegraph from Newmarket had ensured her Classic price had contracted from 7-6 to 6-4.

The second Cecil sweep concerned the middle-distance three-year-olds, notably the stable's three Derby hopes, at this stage kept apart. Big, rangy Silver Dome, with McGlone up

again, was first past, lying up with four-year-old Minds Music. Then came Commander in Chief's half-brother Dushant, stride for stride with the filly Solar Crystal. And lastly, Bright Water, brother to the 1993 Derby favourite Teby.

He is not a massive horse, but bigger than his disappointing sibling, and all atheist. He came into focus bent like a bow over his bit, and afterwards Pat Eddery was visibly enthusiastic. Cel- li, too, trotted away well pleased with his morning's work. Yesterday the Limekilns was still a field of dreams.

Photograph: Robert Hallam

3.05: **TRAVADO**, 11 lengths behind **VIKING FLAGSHIP** at Cheltenham. 2.30: Emotions would run high in the winners' enclosure if the veteran Mole Board won this, the final race of his career. But unless rain softens the ground, **BORO EIGHT**, a fresh horse who acts well on fast going, can come out best for his capable trainer.

3.40: **STRONG PROMISE** has excellent credentials for this, having only just failed to hold Urubanda at Aintree.

4.15: **GENERAL RUSTY** likes to hear his hooves rattle and should win this if the going remains fast.

5.00: **TRAVADO**, 11 lengths behind **VIKING FLAGSHIP** at Cheltenham. 5.15: Emotions would run high in the winners' enclosure if the veteran Mole Board won this, the final race of his career. But unless rain softens the ground, **BORO EIGHT**, a fresh horse who acts well on fast going, can come out best for his capable trainer.

5.20: **GENERAL RUSTY** likes to hear his hooves rattle and should win this if the going remains fast.

5.45: **FOREST**

GOING: Good to Firm (in places). **LEADIN**, galloping course with stiff fence, Uphill run-in of 240yd. **COURSES**: 1m N of town of A435. Bus link from Cheltenham railway station (serviced by Bristol, Birmingham and London Paddington) 2m away. **ADMISSION**: Club & Tattersalls combined £12 (Juniors, 16-24 years, £5); Foster's Enclosure £5. **CAR PARK**: Free.

5.50: **LEADING TRAINERS WITH WINNERS**: D Nicholson – 38 winners from 190 runs gives a success ratio of 18.9%; and a 21 level stakes of 413.58; M Pipe – 24 winners from 110 runs gives a success ratio of 21.8%; D O'Brien – 22 wins from 14.4% – 15.4%; K Headon – 22 wins from 26.6% – 31.3%; **LEADING JOCKEYS**: D Donoghue – 44 winners, 227 rides, 18.4%, +12.3%; A Maguire – 26 winners, 182 rides, 14.3%, +5.2%; J Osborne – 24 winners, 173 rides, 13.5%, +6.8%; N Williamson – 21 winners, 87 rides, 24.1%, +5.3%; **WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS**: None. **LONG-DISTANCE WINNERS**: Dacia Keeney (340) has been sent 500 miles by J Mc Neill from Skerton Wood End, Cumbria; Kessell Bay (1.05) has 225 miles by Ms M Neill from Lingdale, Cleveland.

5.55: **CERTAIN ANGLE** (nap) 3.40 **Tara Rambler** 4.15 **General Rusty** 5.00 **Forest**

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Most of the time footballers sleep late and get home early. Those with big names are paid more than some people who run countries

As a labour force, footballers are hardly to be compared with coal miners, firemen and oil riggers - no matter what you hear from their union. It's a short career but show me a manual worker who wouldn't swap places. It's a damned sight better than working on a hospital ward or an assembly line. There are perks for sure, but boxers would laugh at them.

You can't beat the hours. Most of the time footballers sleep late and get home early. Those with a big name in the Premiership are paid more than some people get for running countries. They don't have to worry about the mortgage, health care, the gas bill or how their children will be educated. They still come from working-class back-

grounds but it isn't long before they are voting with their wallets. Pandered to by the game's middle-class following, the glitz in print and across the airwaves, they lose touch with reality.

Now comes a survey to suggest that footballers do not suffer much stress either. It was conducted by a psychology lecturer, Dr Howard Khan of Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, who interviewed 512 players and 10 managers in the Scottish Premier and First Divisions.

"We thought we'd find that footballers have an extremely hard life," he said this week in the *Daily Telegraph*. "Pressure from the crowds and referees, TV cameras on them all the time, and the general in-

spection of their lifestyle led us to expect that they suffered enormous levels of stress. But that wasn't the case."

To discover that the stress experienced by footballers is minimal compared with other trades and professions Britain comes as no surprise personally. As Dr Khan concludes, football managers take most of the strain. "It is why several have had heart attacks in the past two years," he added. "The players are so laid back they are almost falling over. There's not enough pressure on them to do a decent job."

With players in the Premiership earning upwards of £5,000 a week, in some cases four times as much, it isn't a union they need but Se-

curity. "What stress?" a manager said recently. "If anyone is going to be made a scapegoat it's me." And that is a petrified truth.

Despair in a footballer is ephemeral. Another week, another

game. If necessary, another club. If you are half-way decent there is always one out there.

Stress is the dole queue, a cardboard box for a bed, negative equity, abandonment, redundancy. It isn't missing a goal, mistiming a pass, getting dropped or even playing in a team threatened by relegation. As the Leeds manager, Howard Wilkinson, discovered a few weeks ago, some players cannot even be relied upon to give of their best in a cup final.

No more justifiable cause has been taken up in sport than that which 35 years ago liberated professional footballers in England from a maximum wage and the iniquitous retain and transfer system.

One of the great figures remembered from that time was Nat Lofthouse, a successfully vigorous Bolton and England centre-forward who became his club's president.

An interview with Lofthouse in Arthur Hopcraft's splendid book, *The Football Man*, published in 1968, serves to emphasise the change in attitude brought about by the effects of affluence and a different audience.

Lofthouse... caught the essential gratitude and surprise of the working man that worldly comfort can be his without the drudgery of manual labour," Hopcraft wrote.

"It is one of the key factors in the public's embrace and nurturing of

football. Lofthouse... talked about one memorable early morning in Bolton: 'The team was going to South Africa for nine weeks. I left my house at half past seven to be picked up by the coach at the bottom of the road. There's a works down there and the men were rolling in. Half past seven, that was, and I was there with my cases going to South Africa for nine weeks, all paid with £2 a day spending money.' Lofthouse conveyed a sense of victory, not just pleasure, when he said that."

What bothered me all those years ago was that too many players went along with the game's feudalism. Now it is that agent-inspired market which came about was not a labour triumph anyway.

Jackson to reconsider boycott

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Colin Jackson hinted yesterday that he might relent in his determination to boycott all British Athletic Federation events other than the Olympic trials this season.

The world 110 metres hurdles record holder said he was ready to discuss his position with members of the BAF promotions unit when he returns from a racing trip to South Africa next week.

However, he refused to countenance the idea of talking to the BAF executive chairman, Peter Radford, whose reprimand after he had raced in a day after pulling out of last season's AAA Championships with injury prompted Jackson's original decision to do his racing abroad.

Since then, Jackson has trained and raced extensively in Australia, and he believes the break has done him good. "Things look more promising," he said. "I've calmed down a lot in myself. I realise that the BAF promotions unit work

hard and that I am one of the athletes they want to promote. I'm ready to see what they want to do and whether I fit in. I am ready to act on it. If they can understand the problems I went through last year that is the key thing for me. It certainly won't be down to money if I don't run."

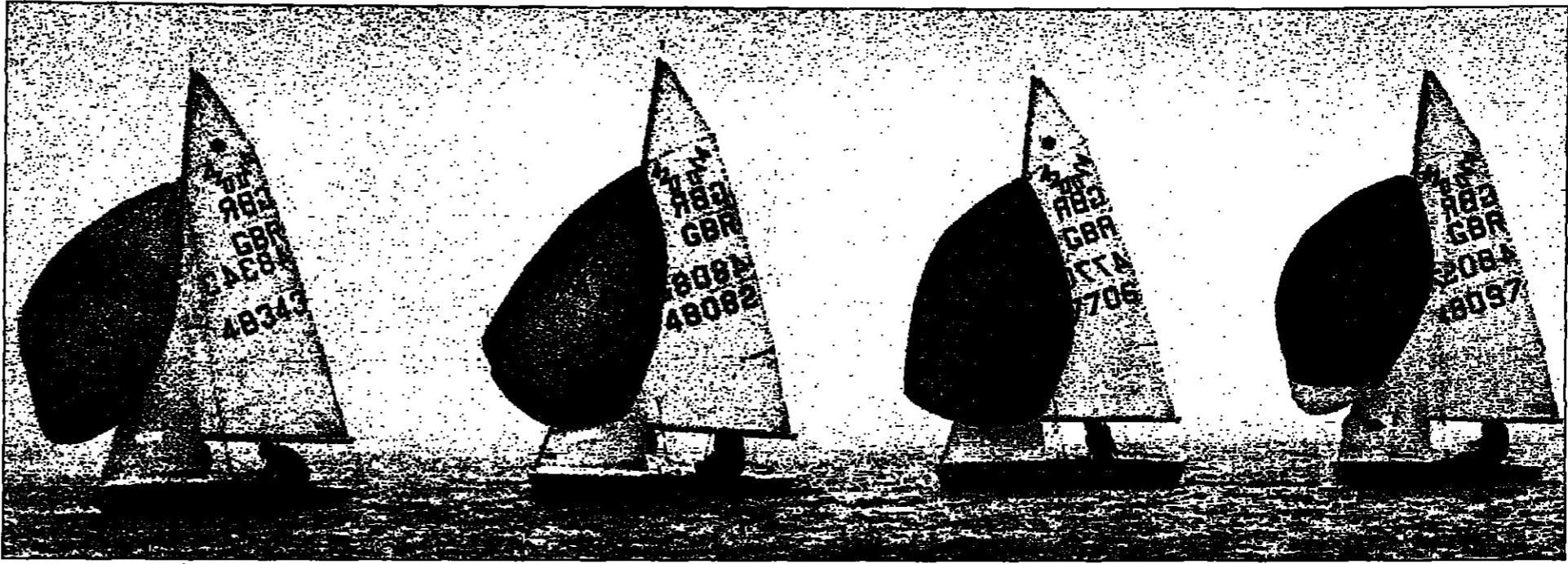
I realise that a lot of people would like to see me run. My mum and my Nan have been on me about it as well since I got back."

But Jackson's feelings about the dispute with his home federation still run deep. "What happened last year left me very disappointed. I've always been the good boy of athletics, if like I am just the same person I was in 1988, but when someone walks into the Federation and walks all over you... I had many other things on my mind at the time. I was injured and I wasn't well, and it all came to a head."

Asked if he would meet Radford now to discuss the situation, his response was vehement. "Hell, no. No way. We'd better bypass this now because I'm getting vengeance in my heart again."

Aberdeen will decide over

Weather works against youthful enterprise in national championships



III wind: At the RYA Holt National Youth Championships off Hill Head, in the Solent, yesterday, the 150 entrants in the five classes again had to contend with the light air that caused all Tuesday's races to be lost. The 420 fleet (above) features Sally Cuthbert, three times a World Championship gold medallist.

Photograph: David Ashdown

Partick refuse to offer refunds after lights go out at Firhill

Football

Partick Thistle yesterday insisted that they will not offer refunds to spectators following the abandonment of Tuesday's Scottish Premier Division game against Aberdeen.

The match was called off after 39 minutes because of floodlight failure, with supporters given vouchers for free

entry when the match is replayed on Tuesday 16 April.

The Thistle secretary, Robert Reid, said: "There will be no cash refunds, nor will the vouchers be available for any other game. Our only other home game left this season is against Celtic and that is an all-ticket match, so those vouchers will admit supporters to Tuesday's game only."

Aberdeen will decide over

the next 48 hours whether to subsidise supporters travelling back to Glasgow. Their fans have faced the long trip three times in the space of eight days, and now face another long trek to Tuesday.

Aberdeen's general manager, David Johnston, said: "We will have a look at helping out our supporters, something we did last year but, until the directors can get round to

discussing the matter, we can't comment."

However, Roddie Arnott, the chairman of the Aberdeen Supporters' Association, believes that, if fans are to be compensated for their travel, Thistle should be the club to do it.

"I would prefer to see Partick pay for the Aberdeen supporters' buses because I don't see why Aberdeen should have to pay out for Thistle's blunder,"

he said. The match referee, Bill Crombie, abandoned Tuesday's game six minutes before the interval, with Thistle's Firhill Park stadium in semi-darkness.

The Partick manager, Murdoch MacLeod, said: "The problem occurred in mid-afternoon and the electricians were called in. We were told before the game began that it was likely to be repaired and the referee instructed that the floodlights be switched on as soon as possible. But each time we tried they went back out."

The game was goalless when Crombie finally called a halt, although Partick, who remain desperate for points in their attempt to escape relegation, had been frustrated when the Aberdeen goalkeeper, Michael Watt, saved Ian Cameron's penalty after Derek McWilliams was pulled down.

Richmond money talks

Rugby Union

STEVE BALE

Richmond, the hallowed London club who by their own admission have been too long asleep, yesterday roused themselves sufficiently to sign two Welsh half-backs for next season and set a monetary benchmark for others tempted to join professional rugby union's nascent transfer system. They expect the Bath and England forward Ben Clarke to be next.

Neither Adrian Davies nor

Andy Moore, who faced each other in the 1990 University

match for Cambridge and Oxford respectively, is currently Wales' first choice. But they are Cardiff's

- Davies to the frustration of the

reluctant centre Jonathan Davies

- and together represent a significant first stage in the re-building of Richmond. The connection was made by Davies's younger brother Lloyd, who is already at the club.

The 27-year-old half-backs' departure from the most presti-

gious Welsh club to a member of the Courage Third Division sends a devastating message that the financial incentives on offer in England cannot be matched in Wales. Already Neath's Llewellyn brothers have signed for London clubs, Gareth for Harlequins and Glyn for Wasps.

Davies and Moore have each agreed five-year contracts with Richmond worth up to an annual £60,000 to become full-time rugby players. Davies will cease to be a surveyor and Moore to be involved in the family building company.

Richmond's chief executive, Simon Elliott, said his recruitment programme would add a director of rugby and at least half a dozen players to the squad who had already assured the club of promotion. Richmond are second in the Third Division behind Coventry, with the top four going up to create a 14-club Second Division.

Though Moore has four caps

and Davies nine, they have

played together for Wales only once - the World Cup game

against Japan last May. In fact, Davies has seldom fulfilled himself internationally and Moore this season lost his scrum-half place to the exceptional Robert Howley.

"With European rugby going through enormous change, I want to be part of a club that has a strong tradition but sees professionalism as a real opportunity for the game," Moore said. The curious thing was he was not talking about Cardiff.

Cardiff have tried to persuade them to stay, but the club - even though they have the Welsh Rugby Union's permission to become a limited company - have nothing like the cash that is available to Richmond Ltd, which has inserted contractual clauses releasing both players for Wales duties.

They do not expect to be the last émigrés. "Cardiff should in theory be able to attract and keep the best players around," Davies said. "But potentially there are a number of players in Wales who could well be thinking of moving elsewhere."

Otago were then rewarded with a penalty when a touch judge spotted a midfield ball being hauled away without the ball and Cooper struck the ball over to give his side victory.

Cooper engineers Otago comeback

Otago Highlanders 33
Natal 32

The Otago Highlanders staged a tremendous finale to win their Super-12 game against South Africa's Natal in a thrilling game at Dunedin, New Zealand, yesterday.

Down 24-13 at half-time and then 32-13 after Natal's James Small landed a drop goal and scored a try, Otago's full-back Matthew Cooper sparked a magnificent comeback for the Highlanders with a converted try.

Soon after John Leslie, the captain, charged down a clearing kick and chased successfully for another converted try. Cooper closed the gap to 32-30 with a timely penalty.

Otago were then rewarded with a penalty when a touch judge spotted a midfield ball being hauled away without the ball and Cooper struck the ball over to give his side victory.

Township start for Lions

The Lions will play in a South African township for the first time since apartheid was abolished when their 13-match tour of the Republic begins on 24 May next year in Korsten, outside Port Elizabeth.

It will be the first Lions visit to South Africa since 1980 and follows the recent pattern of Lions' trips to Australia and New Zealand, with the three Tests being crammed into the final weeks of the tour.

The Lions agreed to one match on their fixture list being in a township to assist the growth of the game there. A South African Rugby Football Union official said: "Sarfa remains committed to a vision of rugby becoming a truly national sport, representing the whole country. For this reason we are pleased that the Lions will visit it in disadvantaged areas in a suburb of Port Elizabeth."

The Lions will encounter South Africa's leading regional sides during their six-week spell in the Republic - Western Province, Orange Free State,

wikshire side that includes Trevor Revan, who was ordered off during a league match against Fylde last weekend.

The Rugby Lions forward, a member of last season's title-winning team, was dismissed for alleged punching, but Harry Walker, Warwickshire's match secretary, said: "Trevor can play until he comes before the county disciplinary committee, which has a backlog of cases to consider. So it seems unlikely that he would appear [before them] until after the final. Even if Rugby Lions imposed a club suspension - and I reckon that is improbable - then it would not affect his availability for the county."

Revan will train with the squad on Sunday and Warwickshire will announce their team the following morning.

LIONS TOUR TO SOUTH AFRICA: 24 May-5 June; Eastern Province Invitational, Addo Stadium, Port Elizabeth; 28 May, Western Province, Cape Town; 29 May, Free State, Bloemfontein; 4 June, Transvaal, Johannesburg; 7 June, Northern Transvaal, Pretoria; 10 June, South Africa, Durban; 13 June, Western Province, Cape Town; 16 June, Orange Free State, Bloemfontein; 19 June, South Africa, Port Elizabeth; 22 June, South Africa, Cape Town; 24 June, Border, East London; 25 June, South Africa, Durban; 1 July, SA Barbarians, Welkom; 5 v South Africa, Johannesburg; 21 July, SA Barbarians, Welkom; 23 v South Africa, Durban; 1 July, SA Barbarians, Johannesburg.

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The Lions will encounter South Africa's leading regional sides during their six-week spell in the Republic - Western Province, Orange Free State,

Transvaal, North Transvaal and Natal - in a demanding build-up to the Test matches.

The games against Western Province and Transvaal are in midweek, which means there will be little opportunity during the early stages of the trip to split the squad into a Test side and a second team.

The Lions start at sea level, at Port Elizabeth, before going to the 6,000ft altitude of Johannesburg and Pretoria for the second phase of the tour at the start of June. They then return to the coast for the first Test in Cape Town and the second Test in Durban. The final Test is back at altitude in the World Cup final stadium at Ellis Park, Johannesburg, on 5 July.

While Lions tours are a popular survivor of the professional era, far less welcome to the clubs at least, would be the continuation of the County Championship. The final of this season's CIS-sponsored version goes ahead at Twickenham on Saturday week, when Gloucestershire will take on a War-

wickshire side that includes

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Clubs on brink of break with RFU

Rugby Union

STEVE BALE

Every bit as intransigent as the Rugby Football Union, England's major clubs are preparing to make the fateful decision to secede from their governing body. Relationships have broken down so completely that it would be no surprise if today's emergency board meeting in the City of London of their umbrella grouping, English Professional Rugby Union Clubs, came to this momentous conclusion.

The only hope then would be for the RFU president, Bill Bishop, notably absent from Tuesday's watershed Twickenham press briefing, to step in as a last-ditch mediator during the 24 days that would remain until the end of the season and EPRUC's departure became official.

Bishop, considerably more conciliatory than Cliff Brittle, the RFU executive chairman who has been leading the union's negotiating team, does not care to be remembered as the president under whose stewardship English rugby had a second great schism to follow that of rugby league 101 years ago.

On Tuesday the RFU announced its willingness to negotiate on a number of subsidiary matters but not the substantive ones concerning the administration of the professional club game, which begins with the end of the RFU moratorium on 6 May, and its financial aspects.

The clubs want – perhaps demand would be a better word – autonomous control of both but the RFU has declared them to be non-negotiable and is in effect challenging EPRUC, which represents the 20 clubs who make up the present First and Second Divisions, to do its worst. This is now likely. "People are incensed," Donald Kerr of Harlequins, EPRUC's chief executive, said yesterday.

It is not all gloom for the union, however. Brittle is trying to drive a wedge between the First Division clubs, who to-

gether hold a 76 per cent stake in EPRUC, and the Second Division, and it is by no means certain that all the clubs involved, including some in the First Division, will readily agree to the imminent schism.

Yesterday the RFU received support from Richmond, who already know they will be among the four clubs promoted from the Third Division – and so admitted to EPRUC. "As a founding club, Richmond supports the RFU in its role as controller of the game in England," Symon Elliott, the chief executive, said.

Since Tony Hallett, the RFU secretary, is a former Richmond captain and chairman, it would have been peculiar had Elliott said otherwise, but his remarks were of special interest as Richmond are following the professional path as aggressively as anyone after the injection of £2.5m from a businessman. Yesterday they announced the signing of Adrian Davies and Andy Moore, the Cardiff half-backs.

Hallett is still trying to be optimistic. "There will be a bust-up but I don't believe it will become a breakaway," he said yesterday. However, the clubs have said all along – in direct contradiction of the RFU's insistence that broadcasters would deal only with Twickenham – that they have television and sponsorship deals in place to underwrite their own rebel competitions.

Meanwhile the RFU's insistence that divisional rugby continue as an essential part of producing a successful England team – but thereby removing club rugby from the programme for a financially critical period in autumn – is another apparently irreconcilable cause of division.

"Having played in divisional games and captained the South-West to a divisional championship, I know that divisional rugby has been a failure," John Hall, Bath's rugby director, said after a meeting of the club's management board. "Top-flight rugby is the answer, not divisions."

Richmond money talks, page 27

Some things on Newmarket's timeless Heath never change, writes Sue Montgomery. Derby fancies may come and go, but yesterday morning the enduring modern symbol of the world's most famous race, Lester Piggott, was out at dawn doing what he does best. Piggott, aged 60, may have retired from competitive race-riding, but horses are in his blood, and the old maestro is now happy to turn the clock back nearly half a century to when he was an anonymous schoolboy riding exercise.

Yesterday morning Piggott (pictured above,

on the far side) was on board Prince Of Andros, trained at Sefton Lodge by David Loder. Piggott, though still lean and spare, is more relaxed than he has ever been, and is content to pass on his unsurpassed knowledge to one of the emerging talents of the racing industry. Loder, aged 32, was born a decade before Piggott first rode to fame with his first Classic victory on Never Say Die in the 1954 Derby.

Piggott last rode competitively in Britain in 1994 and his wife, Susan, has now given up training. However, Piggott still lives in Newmarket and this

spring he has been seen regularly on the Heath riding out for Loder.

This is always an important time of the year for the leading trainers on the Flat. The season's first three Classics all take place within the next two months and nearly all the leading contenders will be showing their paces in the coming weeks. Many will be on public view for the first time this season at Newmarket's Craven meeting next week, as will the country's leading jockeys. The most famous of them all, however, will not be seen.

Photograph: Robert Hallam; Racing, page 25

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By Spurius
Wednesday's Solution
Leeds chairman Silver retires
Football

RUPERT METCALF

The possible demise of Leeds United's manager has been distracting football's chattering classes for much of the season. Yesterday, however, it was not Howard Wilkinson who left Elland Road, but the Yorkshire club's chairman, Leslie Silver.

The 71-year-old Silver, after 14 years as chairman, retired from the Leeds board on medical grounds, with the managing director, Bill Fotherby, assuming temporary control. The announcement follows a run of poor results which has caused unrest among supporters, but Silver insisted his decision was made purely for health reasons.

"I am leaving the board altogether because I have been advised by medical experts to slow

down," Silver said. "I had a bit of a heart problem a year or so ago and when I had another check recently I was advised to take things easy." He will retain his majority shareholding in the club for the time being.

Silver joined the board in April 1981 and, after installing Wilkinson as the manager seven years later, was a major force behind the club's progress to the League title in 1992. In recent years, though, success has been elusive.

Down the road at Huddersfield Town, their 25-year-old striker Craig Whittington faces the sack after being found guilty of misconduct yesterday by the Football Association. He has been banned from the game until 1 November after being caught using cannabis twice within 10 months by the FA's anti-drugs unit.

Whittington claimed he had not knowingly taken the drug on either occasion. The first time, in March 1995, he believed he may have eaten cakes laced with cannabis at a party and then, in January this year, he claimed to have taken the drug unwittingly when smoking strangers' cigarettes at a New Year's Eve party.

A Leyton Orient player, Roger Stanislaus, was sacked by his club earlier this season after testing positive for cocaine.

Bobby Gould, the Wales manager, left out four veterans

– Neville Southall, Ian Rush, Mark Hughes and David Phillips – when he named his squad for the friendly in Switzerland on 24 April. Wrexham's Andy Marriott and Tranmere's Danny Coyne will contest Southall's goalkeeping jersey. Ryan Giggs has also been left out due to club commitments.

International squads,
Sporting Digest, page 27

'Put Botham in charge'
Cricket
tint on the fence."

Ian Botham should be given total responsibility for knocking the England team back into shape, according to Allan Lamb.

The former Test batsman believes Botham and Graham Gooch are the best candidates to join Ray Illingworth's panel of selectors, but he said yesterday: "I think the situation we have got into is farcical. Ily has stood down as supremo, so we need to replace him with someone else. Instead, we are going back to the old system of a coach and a chairman of selectors and I think that's wrong."

"One man should be in charge and he should pick the selectors he wants. I would say to Ian Botham 'go and sort it out. We'll pay you to get English cricket right'.

According to Lamb, however, the best solution is another person to replace Illingworth. "Ian would have to give up his media work to do it, but that wouldn't be a problem if we paid the right money for the job," he said.

"As it is, David Lloyd faces a mammoth job as coach and if I was Ily I would stand down altogether if I wasn't allowed to pick my own selectors."

Lamb, meanwhile, has not entirely abandoned hope of playing one more season for Northamptonshire, but he admitted the odds were "heavily against" that happening because of a forthcoming book and his refusal to have the manuscript vetted by Lords ahead of publication.

Lamb could not understand where the difficulty might lie. "I can't see where there's going to be a problem. These are just the sort of people who should be involved. It's time to get younger men in."

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ACROSS

- Way chief appears to have a certain formality (6)
- Parrot-fancier gets second prize (6)
- Projectile – large one's found in sea (9)
- Expect it's a carol singer (5)
- British having trouble with security (4)
- Flailing weapon accounting for group of worthy citizens? (6, 4)
- Structure whereby a region's developed (8)
- Player can be released from contract, ordinarily (5)
- Student in Russia is dim (5)

DOWN

- Being indiscreet can be effective (7)
- Philosophical Genevan who'd be hard pressed to arouse us? (8)
- Bear verbatim interpretation if shortened or cut? (10)
- Type of pastry, one used in Florence briefly (4)
- Play doctor and nurse endlessly (5)
- Tiara made by skilled man (9)
- Burlesque in which nudes will perform before President (4-2)
- Ceremony associated with English degree (6)
- Arrange to have embryo transfer around day one (4)

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IN SEARCH OF MASTERY

Tim Glover on prospects for the US Masters

26

Olympic warm-up event in jeopardy

Hockey

BILL COLWELL
reports from Atlanta

A major pre-Olympic tournament involving some of the world's leading hockey nations is under threat because the facilities here are incomplete. With less than 100 days to go to the start of the games, the practice pitches are not ready and the competition pitch is unavailable – which is an embarrassment for the host city.

Great Britain, Pakistan, India, Argentina and South Korea have travelled here to join the United States in the prestigious Six Nations Pre-Olympic Tournament, which is scheduled to start today on what is supposed to be the Olympic practice pitch.

The problems started when the two artificial grass pitches being prepared for the Games were found to be unsatisfactory when they were completed last summer, and were dug up. There were delays in starting the new construction work and although the pitch at the 15,000-seat Morris Brown Stadium, where this week's tournament should have taken place, has been completed, the stadium cannot yet be used by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games because of contractual difficulties with the constructors.

Furthermore, the main pitch at the Clark Atlanta University Ground, the practice venue, has still not been laid – the site yesterday resembled a concrete car park. A disappointed and frustrated David Whittle, the British team manager, said: "We have come all the way here for an elite tournament and we need to play quality hockey for our development and selection purposes, but in no way am I prepared to jeopardise the safety of Olympic athletes without involving the players themselves. We will see what the practice brings forth."

Whittle has tried to persuade the US Field Hockey Association to switch the event to California, with the participating countries meeting some of the costs. This was ruled out as being logically and financially unacceptable.

Eric Donegan, the Canadian Tournament Director, who first became aware of the problems less than two weeks ago, said: "It is all less than perfect but I'm hoping that we can keep the tournament on. A lot of people have come a long way. My aim is to maintain an official competition."

A spokesman for the USFHA, Marc Whitney, said how disappointed it was that Morris Brown was unavailable to test the Olympic facilities. He insisted it was not for lack of effort. It is, however, hard to believe in this city in transition – where helicopters have been hovering low to dry out building sites and where Billy Payne, the chairman of ACOG, claims that 50 years of improvements in public works have been crammed into the space of a couple of years – that greater effort and foresight could not have prevented this unfortunate situation.

Piggott reluctant to let go of the reins

